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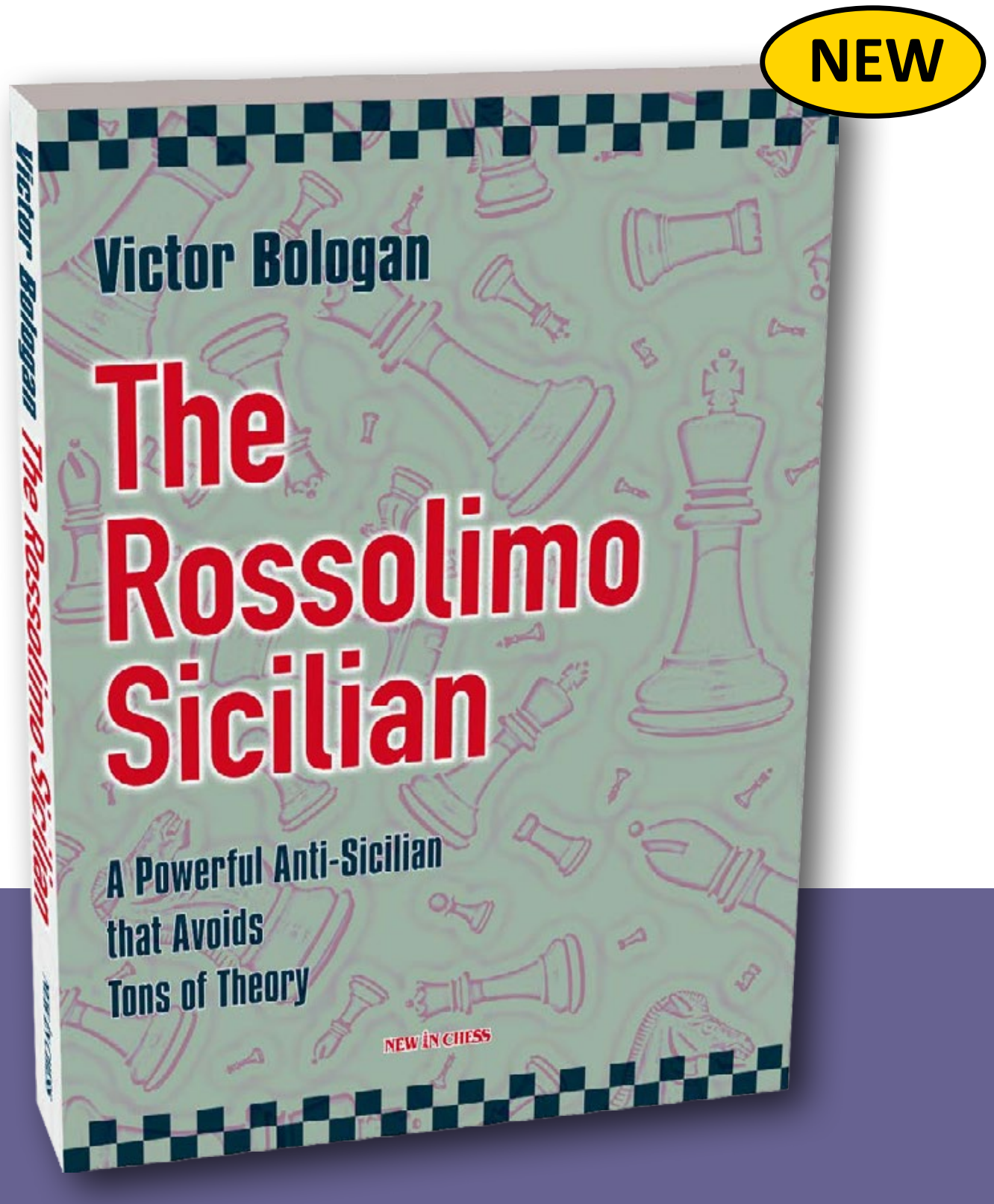

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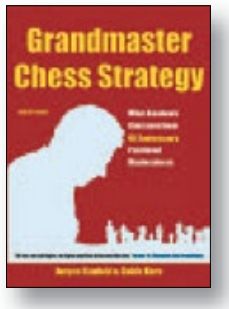

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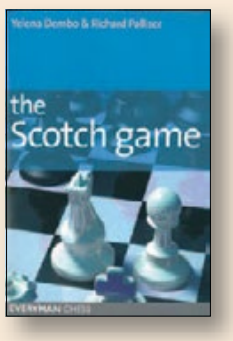

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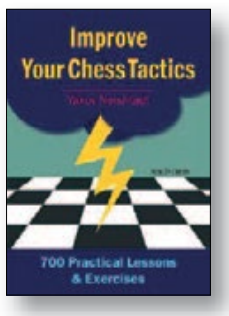

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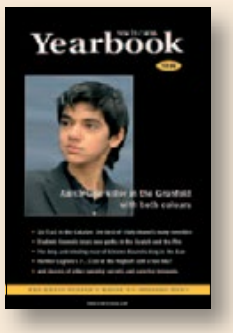

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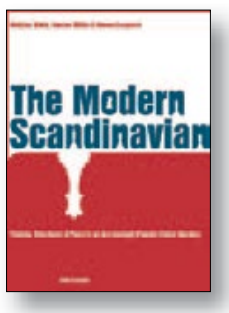

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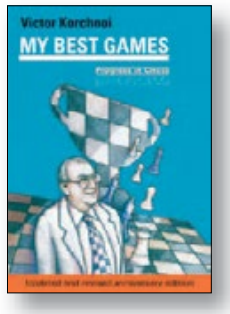

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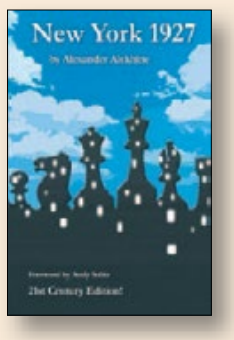

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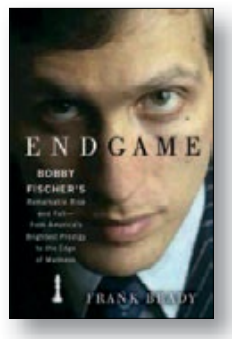

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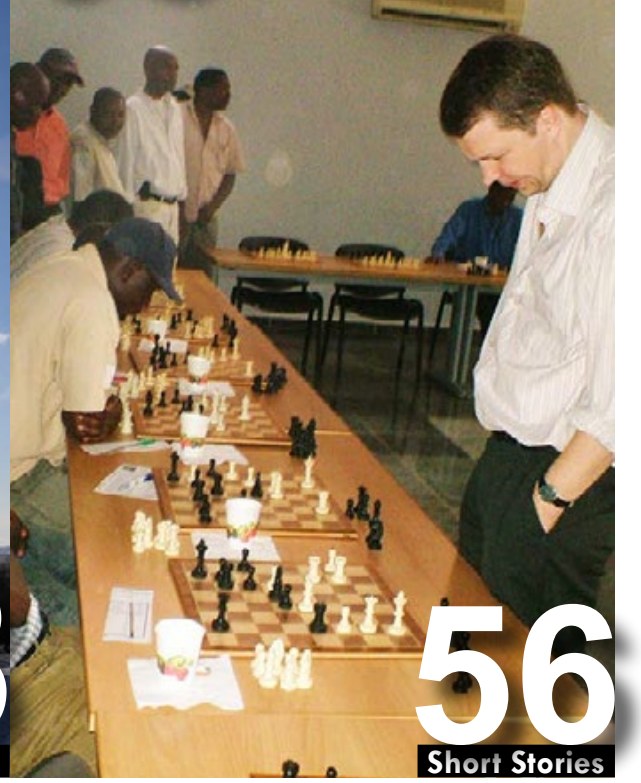

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COVER PHOTO
Levon Aronian: New In Chess

Lacking All Logic

Sebastien Feller, Cyril Marzolo and Arnaud Hauchard are France's most famous chess players of today. Not because they are the strongest players the country has on offer, but because they managed to get chess into the mainstream press. And, as we all know, that is something that rarely happens on good grounds. The French Chess Federation has accused the three of organized cheating, particularly at the Olympiad in Khanty-Mansiysk, where Feller won a gold medal on Board 5. The federation has no doubts about the evidence they found on Marzolo's cell phone (coded messages allegedly signalling moves in a manner that we believe could have been way less complicated), but the players are fighting back, claiming the evidence was obtained illegally, and it is anyone's guess how this case will end.

Inevitably, the general indignation about fraudulent behaviour led to renewed calls to fight the cheaters with the most fervent crime-fighters sadly overshooting the mark. There is no doubt that in an 'unprotected' environment cheating at chess is possible, so measures have to be taken, but let's not forget that the vast majority (you and I) has no wish to cheat at all. An obvious choice is banning cell phones. Arbiters should be trained to be alert on signalling from the audience and cheaters should be deterred by bans that would wreck their (professional) careers.

In any case any 'cure' should be avoided that is much worse than the disease. Such as the 15-minute delay of the transfer of the moves that once again was promoted ('It needs to be implemented now') on the ChessBase website. On the surface the idea doesn't sound that bad (the cheaters will not get the moves signalled in time, because their buddies lose precious minutes), but in fact it lacks all logic. Let's look at a few aspects. The author of the article, Frederic Friedel, claims that the 15-minute delay was 'twice used at the Dortmund tournament and worked flawlessly'. Did it? We don't think so. In Dortmund the players were not frisked for any electronic devices and their seconds could walk in and out of the hall freely and signal whatever they might have wanted. The only people affected were the journalists in the press room, who had to ask the players how their games had ended when they walked in. What's more, with the 15-minute delay in force the organizers were signalling to their sponsors on a daily basis that in fact they were supporting a game of cheaters.

EUROPE ECHECS

Sebastien Feller, France's most famous chess player.

Of course, Mr. Friedel knows full well that the 15-minute delay only makes sense if you take substantial additional measures. But if you apply all these extra measures (such as searching the players, blocking radio signals, not allowing anyone in or out of the hall while the round is in progress) there is no reason whatsoever why you should have a 15-minute delay in the first place! Why rob the people at home of that wonderful luxury of following the games in realtime?

While reading his plea you get the idea that he only has a vague idea of what a chess tournament looks like these days. The halls in which the tournaments or matches take place should have 'the atmosphere of a theatre or movie palace', he suggests, where you cannot go in and out all the time. Indeed, that would be a perfect way to control the spectators, but in today's chess world only a fraction of the tournaments takes place in theatres and even there, games take much longer than concerts or movies. Wouldn't it be pretty cruel to force the audience to stay inside for five or six hours?

For once we pin our hopes on FIDE president Kirsan Ilyumzhinov. During a visit to Elista in 2007, Mr. Friedel tried to convince Mr. Ilyumzhinov of the need to adopt the 15-minute delay. At the end of a cosy afternoon with tea and snacks in the Ilyumzhinov family garden the FIDE president jumped up and enthusiastically exclaimed 'Let's do it!'. That was reassuring, and of course nothing ever happened. We're not going to make this a habit, but here we can only hope that everyone will follow our leader!

A Book to Look Forward to

One of the special guests at the Amber tournament in Monaco was Arturo Perez-Reverte. In chess circles the Spanish novelist is mainly famous for *The Flandres Panel*, a historical whodunit around a 15th century painting of a chess game. The position on the board is a retrograde problem the solution of which leads to the murderer. Mr. Perez-Reverte

NEW IN CHESS

Will we read more about Veselin Topalov in the new novel of Arturo Perez-Reverte?

not only came to Monaco to enjoy the best grandmasters in action, he was also looking for inspiration. He is currently working on another book in which chess plays a pivotal role. The scene of the action is France and Italy and the book is expected to be published in the course of next year.

Historical Awareness

Having returned to Saint Louis after his participation in the Amber tournament in Monaco, Hikaru Nakamura informed us that he had 'pulled a Loek'. The historians

Loek who's talking? Hikaru Nakamura with his brandnew BMW 335i

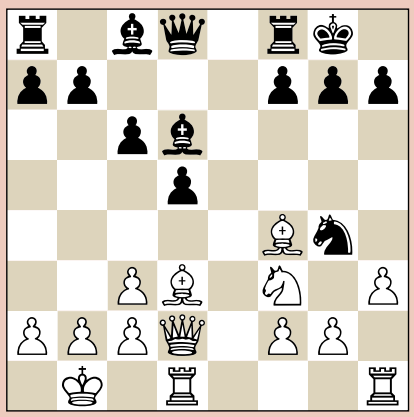
amongst us will understand what he was referring to. On his return he used his Amber winnings to buy a splendid BMW 335i, which he picked up in North Carolina and drove home in 14 hours. The coming weeks we count on Nakamura's historical awareness, hoping he will not pull another Loek. After all the Dutchman crashed the BMW he bought with his earnings at the FIDE World Championship in Groningen in 1997 only weeks after he got it. And yes, your memory serves you right, King Loek crashed another BMW one year later and a Jaguar X in 2002.

Second Again Second

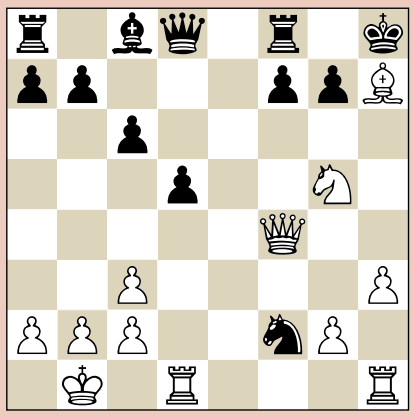
Vishy Anand travelled on from Monaco to Tashkent, for a 4-game rapid match against local hero Rustam Kasimdzhanov. The World Champion won 3½-½, a result that may give an unfair impression of the chances his opponent had. In the first game Kasimdzhanov had an excellent position and in the second game he was totally winning. As he explained to his 'boss' after the game he had been waiting for him to resign and then lost track. Once he was in the lead Anand proved merciless. The third game was a brilliant piece of deep calculation.

RG 3.5 – C42
Vishy Anand
Rustam Kasimdzhanov
Tashkent 2011 (3)

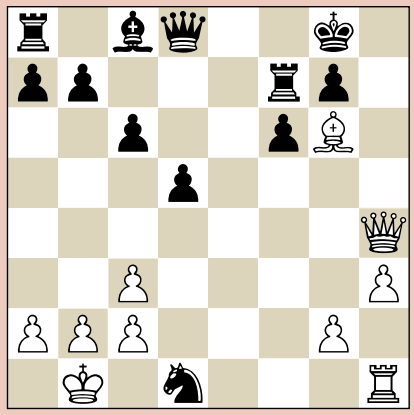
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.♘c3 ♘xc3 6.dxc3 ♗e7 7.♗e3 ♘c6 8.♕d2 0-0 9.0-0-0 ♘e5 10.♔b1 c6 11.♗e2 ♘g4
This knight sortie seems to be a new idea.
12.♗d3 d5 13.♗f4 ♗d6 14.h3!



The result of some serious calculation. Believe it or not, at this point Anand had seen the end of the game! **14...♗xf4 15.♗xh7+! ♔h8 16.♕xf4 ♘xf2 17.♘g5!**



17...f6? This allows a beautiful finish. Black should have tried to hang on with 17...♕f6 18.♕h4 ♕h6 19.♕xf2 ♕xg5 20.♗d3 when White has a strong initiative. **18.♘f7+! ♖xf7 19.♗g6 ♘xd1 20.♕h4+ ♔g8**



21.♖e1! The point of White's combination. Actually, Kasimdzhanov had also seen all this, but here he had interpolated 21.♕h7+ ♔f8, and now

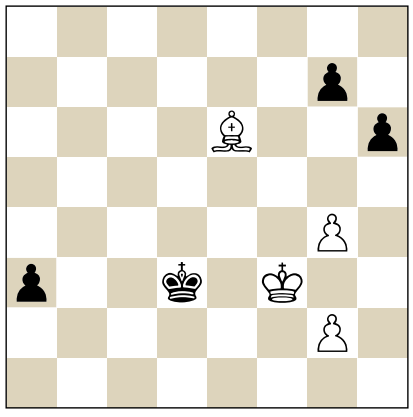
Rustam Kasimdzhanov's reunion with his 'boss' Vishy Anand ended in a 3½-½ victory for the World Champion

22.♖e1 is not a killer in view of 22...♘xc3+ 23.bxc3 ♗e6! 24.♖xe6 ♕b6+ 25.♔c1 ♕g1+, with a draw. **21...♘xc3+ 22.bxc3 ♗e6 23.♖xe6 ♕b6+ 24.♔c1** Black resigned, as after 24...♕g1+ the white queen covers square e1 and 25.♖e1 ends the game.

From Tashkent Anand travelled home to Chennai. In India more good news awaited him, when on April 9 his wife Aruna gave birth to a son! ■

The other g-pawn

On page 91 of New In Chess 2011/1, Jan Timman analyzes the fascinating Kramnik-Carlsen endgame from the London Chess Classic and suggests



Kramnik-Carlsen
London 2010 (6)
position after 68...♔d3

69.g5 hxg5 70.♔g4 ♔e3 71.♔xg5 ♔f2 72.g4. However, this is a draw after 72...♔g3 73.♔f5 g6!. I think GM Timman meant to write 71.g3!, which, it seems to me, does win, because the bishop can control the g2-square and the black king will indeed be outtempoed, for example: 71...♔f2 72.♗d5 g6 73.♗e6 ♔g2 74.♗f7 ♔f2 75.♗d5 etc. It does not look like there are any drawn positions with the pawn on g3.

If this is true, then Kramnik's **69.♔g3?** is not at all an elementary error; it seems to me that the winning line would have been hard even for a world champion to find over the board with limited time, and no access to tablebases.

GM Alex Fishbein
Summit, NJ, USA

Postscript Jan Timman

I agree with your analysis.

Larry Evans

In New In Chess 2011/1 on page 84 of the article about GM Larry Evans entitled 'Chess is my bread and butter', there is mention of 'his' book *Evans on Chess*.

In 1995 at the Western States Open in Reno, Nevada, I presented this book to GM Evans for his autograph. He was amazed and asked me how I had acquired this book. Apparently he had never seen it before and it was never authorized by him!

It appears that Drake Publishing and Mr. Clark created the book by plagiarizing several of GM Evans newspaper columns and published it under Evans own name!! He told me that upon investigating he discovered that they are now out of the chess publishing business.

Robert Woodworth
Omaha, NE, USA

Utterly wrong

Imagine my sheepish surprise when I opened the most recent issue of New In Chess (issue 2011/2 with the H-bomb on the cover) and saw my letter complaining about the new magazine format. When I wrote my missive I had not yet seen a new issue. Now that I have please do me a favor and let your readers know that this cock-

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sure American was completely and utterly *wrong*. The new format is totally astounding. New In Chess is now not just a great chess magazine – it is a great magazine period. If I had gold coins to shower you with at the chess board, I would do so while shouting, 'Bravo! Bravo!'

Kenneth Calitri
Reston, Virginia, USA

Looking for an opponent

I am a first time subscriber to New In Chess. And I think it's fabulous and beautifully made. I spent the first 30 minutes just staring at the geometry, the lighting of photos, and the print is outstanding. I'm captivated by how the magazine feels when you hold it in your hands as well. It feels precision crafted like a beautiful endgame.

I have a request you may be able to help me with: I would like to find someone to play correspondence chess with. Can you help me or pair me with someone? I'm rated about 2100. There's no one in this prison to compete with on the chessboard, so I'm reaching out internationally. The USCF is lazy in paring. I don't know where else to turn. Check mate!

Damion Coppedge
New York, USA

Editorial Postscript

If one (or more) of our readers would like to play correspondence chess with Damion Coppedge, please contact us and we will forward your message to him.

Exchanging ideas

When I saw Hans Ree's article on Bobby Fischer in New In Chess 2011/2, it reminded me of a conversation he had with Bobby about Wilhelm Steinitz claiming he could give God pawn odds and more.

Bobby said that no-one could do this to the Almighty. But then he wondered... 'If I had white, I could hold Him to a draw! – by playing the Exchange Variation of the Ruy Lopez.'

At the risk of sounding like a lunatic, I think I know where he's coming from! This lowly category one player makes an occasional draw with masters and candidate masters with the Exchange Ruy (it's easier if you trade queens asap). I enjoy the look on their faces after the game is done. I know what they're thinking: 'How could I not beat this idiot?' Even lower rated players than me don't grasp that the ♔-♙ ending is a win for White.

Hans Ree asked Bobby: 'But what if God plays the Sicilian?'. Bobby: 'I'll play the ♗c4 Sozin lines and I'll stand better, so what can he do?'

Robert Both
Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

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Letters may be edited or abridged

Vasyl

New In Chess continues to write the name of Ivanchuk wrong. In his Ukrainian passport his first name is written Vasyl. The russified version Vasily has nothing to do with him. I believe you should use his official name. When the Soviet Union was dissolved, the russified names were replaced by the Ukrainian ones. FIDE should also be more careful in this matter. Thanks for understanding this small problem, which is important for a small nation.

Adrian Mikhalchishin
Lviv, Ukraine

Editorial Postscript

It is certainly true that Ivanchuk writes his first name as Vasyl these days. However, everyone in the chess world knows him as Vasily Ivanchuk and wherever he plays this is the name you will see on the name shields. And, as far as we know, he has never objected to this version of his name. In the current situation it is unlikely that anyone is going to call him Vasyl, obviously with the exception of Ukrainians, as long as he doesn't clearly express that this is his wish.

Short Stories

I just want to reiterate a previous e-mail I sent regarding Nigel Short's new column 'Short Stories', that it is a great column. The New In Chess 2011/2 article was as great as the first. I hope he stays for a while!
His tell it like it is articles are a breath of fresh air.

Jeremy Knox
By email

Chemistry

I love the new format. It allows me to hide New In Chess perfectly within my chemistry journals!

Gordon Gribble, Ph.D.
Professor of Chemistry
Hanover, NH, USA

COLOPHON

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Monaco

FRED LUCAS

Two decades of unparalleled generosity came to an end with the 20th Amber Blindfold and Rapid Tournament. For the farewell edition Dutch Maecenas Joop van Oosterom and his wife Muriel invited the cream of chess to return to Monaco, the traditional home of 'Amber'. In the suave luxury of the Monte-Carlo Bay Hotel & Resort, the inimitable Levon Aronian repeated his victories of 2008 and 2009. Dominating right from the start, the Armenian wizard topped the strongest field ever ahead of Magnus Carlsen (superb in the rapid competition) and World Champion Vishy Anand. **John Nunn**, waxing nostalgic already, reports from the Cote d'Azur.

The cast of 2011: Vasily Ivanchuk, Levon Aronian, Vugar Gashimov, Magnus Carlsen, Vladimir Kramnik, Vishy Anand, Alexander Grischuk, Anish Giri, Boris Gelfand, Hikaru Nakamura, Veselin Topalov and Sergey Karjakin.

End of an Era

Monaco

As they have done every spring since 1992, in March the world's top players gathered on the Côte d'Azur for the Amber tournament, that festival of chess renowned worldwide for its luxurious conditions. This time, however, something was different. The 20th Amber tournament was to be the final event of the series, so for one last time the players sat in front of their computer screens for the blindfold chess which has made the Amber tournament unique. They were all there; Amber veterans such as Anand, Kramnik and Ivanchuk (the only player to have taken part in all 20 events), those who have risen to prominence in recent years such as Aronian and Carlsen, and newcomers Nakamura and Giri. In the previous few years the tournament has been held in Nice, but for the final event it returned to its home in Monaco, and was hosted in the luxurious Monte-Carlo Bay Hotel.

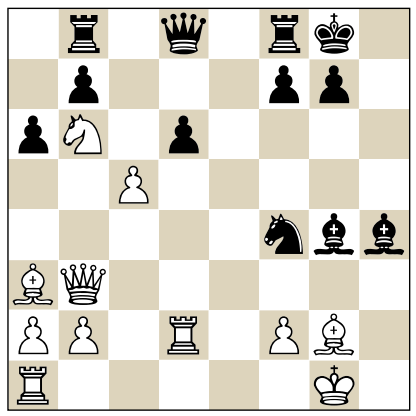
The structure of the tournament was the same as it has been since 1993 (in 1992 there was no blindfold chess), a double-round event with one round of blindfold chess and one round of rapid chess. The only innovation this year was the introduction of a daily 'Best Game' prize of 1000 Euros per day, to be judged by a committee of Ljubojevic and myself, with the assistance of Kortchnoi during the first week. The judges were asked to write down their top three choices in order, whereupon tournament director Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam would add up the marks and announce the winner. Some days this wasn't so simple. One day after Kortchnoi had left, Dirk Jan looked at the lists from Ljubo and myself and realised that no game appeared on both lists. At least no thought need be given to improving the system for next year.

The first round already saw some surprises, as four of the mini-matches ended in 2-0 wipeouts and only two of the 12 games were drawn. The ferocity of this round wasn't quite matched in later rounds, but the play remained entertaining throughout, with less than half the games ending in a draw.

The clash between Aronian and Giri already provided an excellent example of Levon Aronian's swindling ability. It's tempting to call it luck, but it can't really be due to chance since he swindles even very strong opponents so consistently. Aronian himself points out that even when a position is objectively lost, it's still possible to look for moves which increase the probability of inducing a mistake.

EO 4.8 – A29
Levon Aronian
Anish Giri
Monaco blindfold 2011 (1)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.g3 ♘d4 5.♗g2 ♘xf3+ 6.♗xf3 ♗b4 7.♕b3 ♗c5 8.0-0 0-0 9.♘a4 ♗e7 10.d4 exd4 11.♖d1 c5 12. e3 dxe3 13.♗xe3 ♕c7 14.♘c3 a6 15.g4 h6 16.h4 d6 17.g5 hxg5 18.hxg5 ♘h7 19.♘d5 ♕d8 20. ♘b6? ♖b8 21.♗xc5 ♘xg5 22. ♗g2 ♗g4 23.♖d2 ♘e6 24.♗a3 ♘f4 25.c5? ♗h4



The opening has gone horribly wrong for White. Not only is he at least temporarily a pawn down, but his king is exposed and several of his pieces are stuck on the queenside. Black is already threatening an immediate win by 26...♕g5 and in fact White is just lost.

26.♘d5

The best chance; it's more important

Viktor Kortchnoi, guest of honour, and John Nunn, our man on the spot, were members of the jury that decided on the daily 'Best Game' prize.

NEW IN CHESS

The Monte-Carlo Bay Hotel & Resort was the venue of the 20th and final Amber Blindfold and Rapid Tournament. In the left top corner you can see the Vista Palace in Roquebrune, the hotel where in 1992 the first Amber tournament took place.

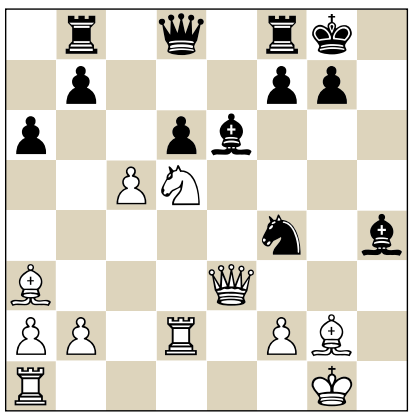
to get the offside knight back into play than to regain the pawn.

26...♗e6

The best reply, pinning the knight and again threatening to win by 27...♕g5 (or 27...♘xg2 followed by ...♕g5+). Here a 'normal' continuation would be 27.♖ad1 ♘xg2 28.♔xg2 ♕g5+ 29.♔f1 dxc5 30.♗xc5 ♖fe8 but it's obvious not only that White is lost (pawn down, exposed king and pinned knight) but also that no special skill is required to win it.

27.♕e3

Objectively worse because it allows Black an instant win. But the win is not too easy to see in blindfold and if Black does not spot the decisive line then his victory is no longer so clear-cut.



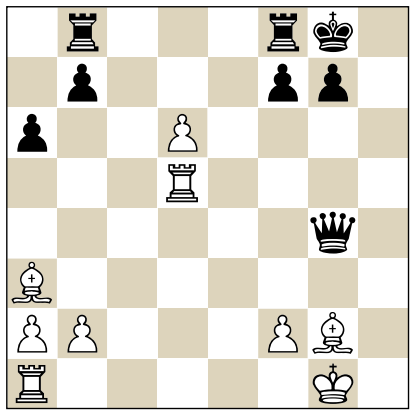
27...♗xd5?!

27...♘xg2 28.♔xg2 ♖e8 wins at once because there's no good square for White's queen; for example 29.♕d3 (29.♕f4 ♗g5 and 29.♕f3 ♕g5+ are also hopeless) 29...♕g5+ 30.♔f1 (30.♔h2 ♗xf2 31.♖xf2 ♗xd5 wins) 30...♗f5 31.♕c3 ♕g4 followed by ...♗e4, with a winning attack.

28.♕xf4 ♗g5 29.♕xg5!

Once again, Aronian avoids the 'normal' line 29.♕xd6 ♗xd2 30.♕xd5 ♕xd5 31.♗xd5 since he would then be an exchange down for nothing in an ending.

29...♕xg5 30.♖xd5 ♕g4 31.cxd6

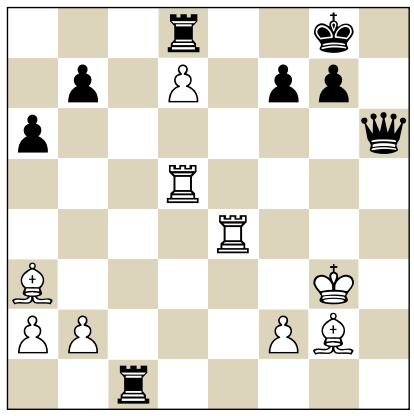


Here White has two bishops for the queen and while the position is still lost, it's possible to see some positive points for White. Firstly, the threats to his king have evaporated, at least for the moment, and secondly the advanced d-pawn will at least be very irritating for Black.

31...♖fd8 32.♖e1 ♖bc8 33.♖e4 ♖c1+ 34.♔h2 ♕g6 35.d7 ♕h6+

36.♔g3

36.♗h3 ♖h1+ 37.♔xh1 ♕xh3+ 38.♔g1 ♖xd7 is a technical win.



36...♖g1?

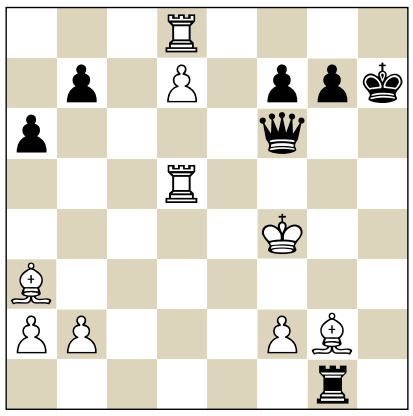
At a stroke Black throws away half a point. 36...f5! 37.♖e8+ ♔h7 was the decisive line, since 38.♖xd8 leads to a lengthy mate by 38...♕g5+ 39.♔f3 ♕g4+ 40.♔e3 ♖e1+ 41.♔d3 ♕e2+ 42.♔d4 ♖d1+ 43.♔c3 ♖c1+ 44.♔b4 ♕c4+ 45.♔a5 b6+ 46.♔xb6 ♕c7+ 47.♔xa6 ♖c6+ 48.♔b5 ♖b6+ 49.♔a4 ♕c6+ 50.♔a5 ♖a6+ 51.♔b4 ♖a4+ 52.♔b3 ♕c4 mate.

Note Aronian's strategy; he doesn't mind allowing a win, but only if it is

so complicated that there is a decent chance his opponent is going to overlook it.

37.♖e8+ ♔h7 38.♖xd8 ♕g6+ 39.♔f4 ♕f6+

Now White could force a draw by returning to g3, but Aronian's ambitions have increased and he now takes a colossal risk.



40.♔e3? ♕xd8?

40...♖e1+ 41.♔d3 ♖d1+ wins. For example, 42.♔e4 ♕h4+ 43.♔e3 ♖xd5 44.♗e4+ g6 45.♗xd5 ♕xd8 and the d7 pawn falls.

41.♗e4+ g6 42.f3

42.♗e7 fails to 42...♕xe7 43.d8♕ ♖e1+ but by securing the e4 bishop White now threatens ♗e7.

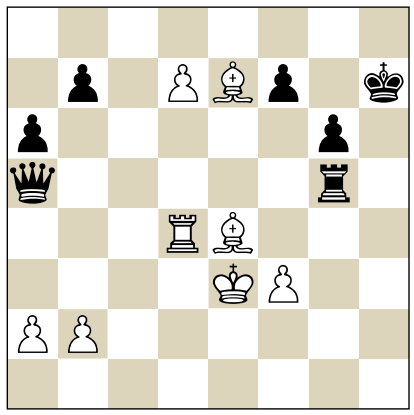
42...♖g5?

The simplest way to force a draw was by 42...f5 43.♗e7 ♕b6+ 44.♗c5 (44.♔f4 ♕c7+ 45.♖d6 ♕c1+ 46.♔e5 ♕c5+ 47.♔e6 fxe4 48.♗f6 ♕xd6+ 49.♔xd6 ♖d1+ 50.♔c7 exf3 51.♗h4 g5 52.♗g3 b5 53.b4 ♔g6 54.♗d6 ♖xd6 55.♔xd6 f2 56.d8♕ f1♕ leaves Black a pawn up in the queen ending) 44...♕d8, when White has nothing better than to return to e7.

43.♗e7 ♕b6+?

The ending after 43...♖xd5 44.♗xd8 ♖xd7 45.♗f6 is miserable for Black, but this was the only way to avoid an immediate loss.

44.♖d4 ♕a5



45.♗xg5?!

45.♔f2! would have won at once.

45...♕xg5+ 46.♔f2 ♕d8 47.♗xb7

It takes longer this way, but with Black's queen totally immobilised White only needs to create a second passed pawn on the queenside.

47...a5 48.a3 ♔g7 49.b4 axb4 50.axb4 f5 51.b5 f4 52.♗e4 g5 53.♔e2 ♔f6 54.♖d5 ♔e6 55.b6 g4 56.fxg4 ♔f6 57.b7

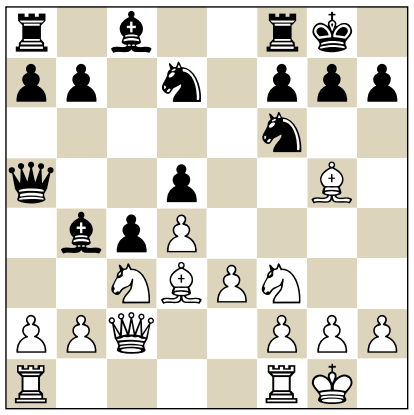
Black resigned.

Kramnik surprisingly failed to open his score in the first round. The game he lost with black was especially attractive.

NOTES BY
Alexander Grischuk

NI 27.7 – D38
Alexander Grischuk
Vladimir Kramnik
Monaco blindfold 2011 (1)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗b4 5.♗g5 ♘bd7 6.cxd5 exd5 7.♕c2 0-0 8.e3 c5 9.♗d3 ♕a5 10.0-0 c4



11.♗e2

A rare move. Usually White plays 11.♗f5 g6 12.♗h3, but then sometimes he doesn't know how to get the bishop away from h3. For example, after 12...♖e8 13.♘d2 ♗xc3 14.♕xc3 ♕xc3 15.bxc3 ♘e4 16.♘xe4 dxe4 one of the main lines is 17.♗g4 ♘b6 18.♗e2.

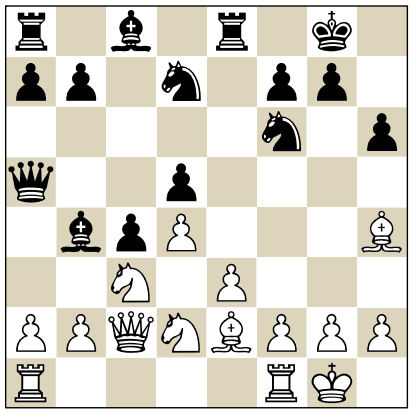
11...♖e8

The main idea behind 11.♗e2 is 11...♗xc3 12.bxc3 ♘e4 13.♗xc4! ♘xg5 14.♘xg5 dxc4 15.♕xh7 mate.

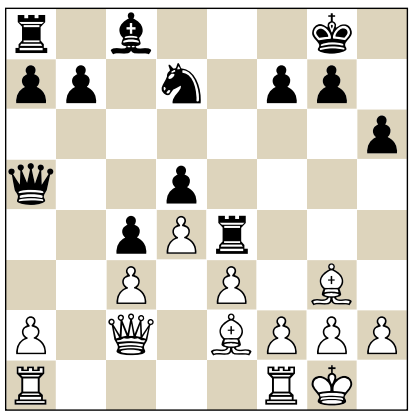
12.♘d2 h6 13.♗h4

NEW IN CHESS

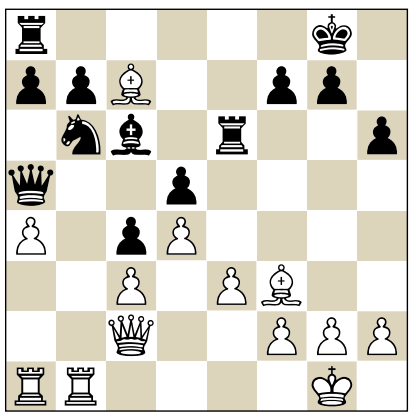
Amber debutant Anish Giri and (soon to be) three-time winner Levon Aronian have a chat over lunch in Eze on the second free day.

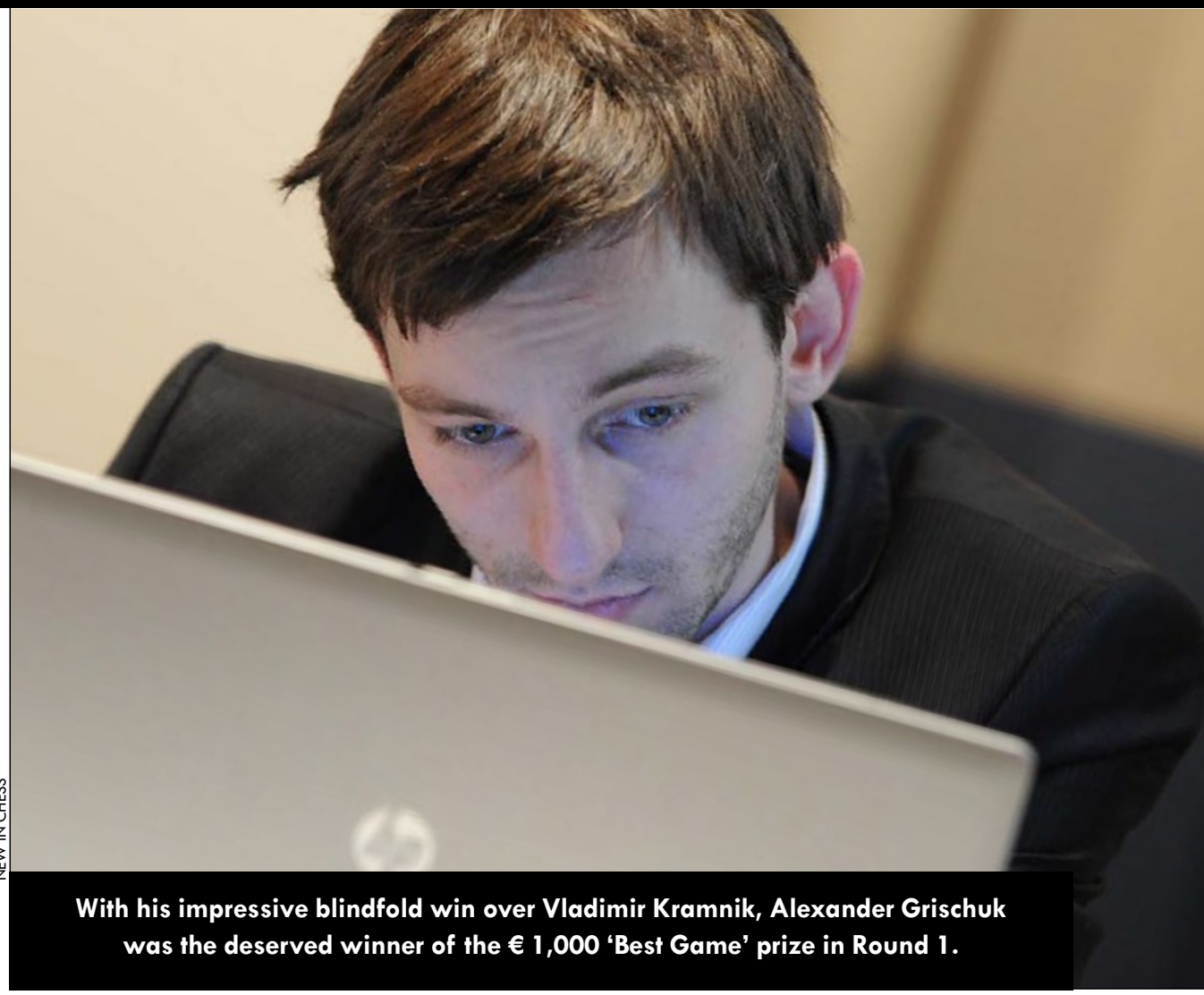


13...♗xc3!? An interesting move: Black sacs the bishop for the knight, but starts a fight for the e4-square.
14.bxc3 ♘e4 15.♘xe4 ♖xe4 16.♗g3



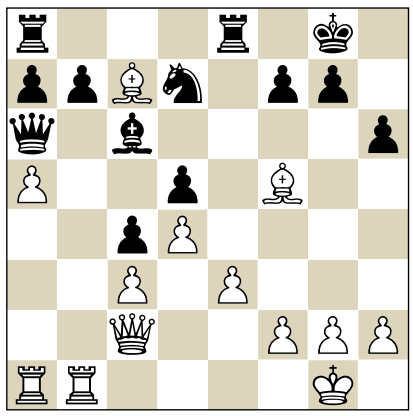
16...♘b6?
This is way too ambitious. Black tries to win the battle for the a4-square, but he doesn't have enough power to do that. Much better was 16...♖e6, followed by ...♘f6-e4 or ...♗d7, ...♖ae8.
17.♗f3 ♖e6
17...♗f5 18.♗xe4 ♗xe4 19.♕d2 is consistent but probably unsound.
18.a4
Now White has an obvious advantage.
18...♗d7 19.♖fb1 ♗c6 19...♗xa4? is out of the question because of 20.♕c1.
20.♗c7



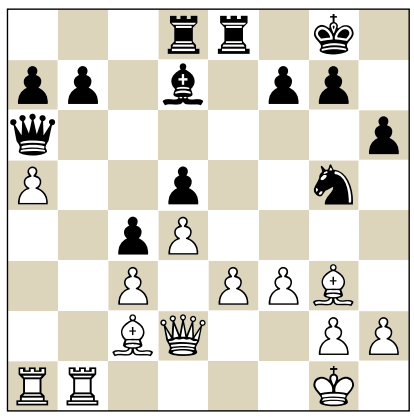


With his impressive blindfold win over Vladimir Kramnik, Alexander Grischuk was the deserved winner of the € 1,000 'Best Game' prize in Round 1.

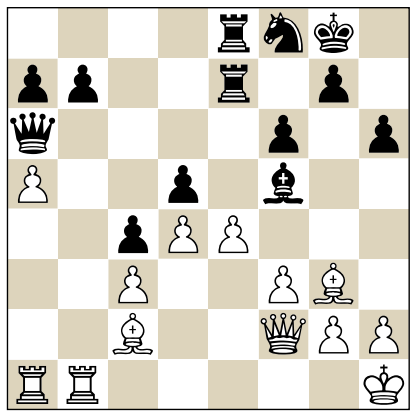
20...♕a6 Not falling for the, for blindfold play, far from obvious trap: 20...♖c8 21.♗xb6 axb6 22.♗g4.
21.a5 ♘d7 22.♗g4 ♖ee8 23.♗f5



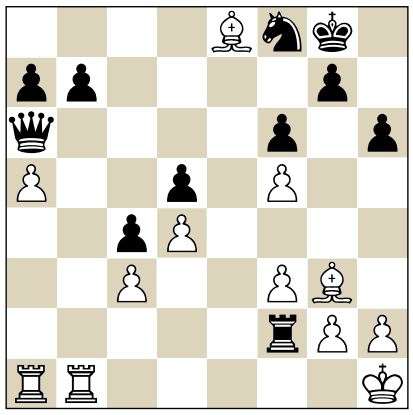
23...♘f8 Nobody in his right mind would play 23...g6 24.♗xg6 fxg6 25.♕xg6+ ♔h8 26.♕xh6+ ♔g8 27.♕g6+ ♔h8, and indeed White wins after the mysterious 28.♗d6!.
24.♕d2
Now White is in time to transfer the bishop to the b1-h7 diagonal.
24...♘e6 25.♗g3 ♖ad8 26.f3 ♗d7 27.♗c2 ♘g5
I wanted to drive the knight away from g5 in order to push e3-e4, but without playing h2-h4, since after 28.h4 ♘h7 29.e4 dxe4 30.fxe4 ♘f6 the knight gets the g4-square. That explains my following strange manoeuvres.



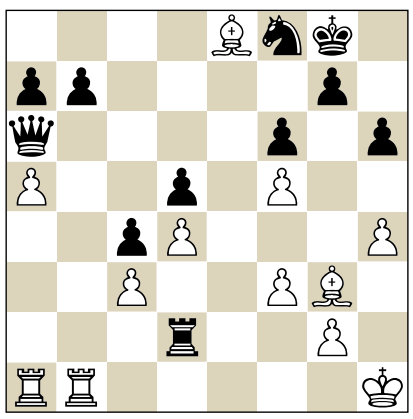
28.♗c7 ♖c8 29.♗f4 ♘e6 30.♗g3 ♘g5 31.♗h4 ♖c7 32.♗g3 ♖cc8 33.♔h1 Probably 33.♕f2 ♖e7 34.♗e5 was more precise. The king is placed well enough on g1.
33...♖e7 34.♗e5 ♖ce8 35.♕f2 f6 36.♗f4 ♘e6 37.♗g3 ♘f8 38.e4 ♗f5?!
38...f5 39.e5 is sad for Black, but the text-move loses practically by force.



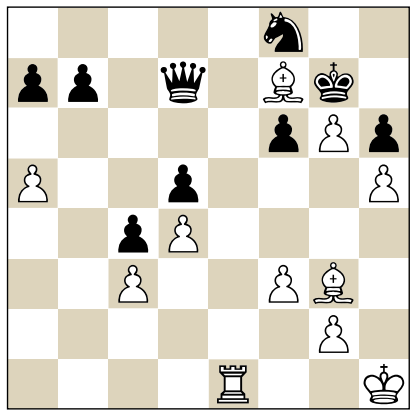
39.exf5!
I had obviously missed 38...♗f5 but I am not sure if Vladimir was aware of the main point of it: 39.exd5 ♖e2 40.♕xe2 ♖xe2 41.♗xf5 is winning for White, but after 39...♗d3! Black gets decent counterplay.
Fortunately, I quickly found the right continuation and didn't search for alternatives.
39...♖e2 40.♗a4 ♖xf2 41.♗xe8



41...♖d2?
Now it's over. The last chance was 41...♖c2, and White needs to find 42.♗b5 (42.♗f4 b5!! 43.axb6 ♖a2 44.b7 ♕xb7!) 42...♖c1+ 43.♖xc1 ♕xb5 44.a6! (44.♖cb1 ♕a6 45.h3 clearly favours White) 44...bxa6 45.♖cb1 ♕d7 46.♖b8 ♔f7 47.♖ab1 ♕xf5 48.♖1b7+ ♘d7 49.♖a8! (49.♖d8 ♔e7 50.♖dxd7+ ♕xd7 51.♖xd7+ ♔xd7 is surprisingly complicated. I was not able to find out whether it is winning for White or not. Maybe the magazine readers will help me?) 49...♔e6 50.♖axa7, and White is winning.
42.h4!
Now the c3 pawn is no longer hanging and White is in time for h4 and ♔h2, after which ♗b5 wins the queen.



42...g6
42...b5 43.axb6 ♖a2 44.b7 ♕xb7 45.♖xb7 ♖xa1+ 46.♔h2 is the difference.
43.fxg6 ♖e2 44.♗f7+ ♔g7 45.h5 ♕c6 46.♖e1 ♖xe1+ 47.♖xe1 ♕d7



48.♔g1! The last precise move. After the inaccurate 48.♖e8 ♕f5 I would have been forced to find the amazing 49.♖e5!! in order to win.
48...b5 49.axb6 axb6 50.♖e8 b5 51.♖b8 ♕e7 52.♗xd5
Black resigned.
The next day I met the Kortchnoi family in the elevator and Viktor Lvovich made a peculiar compliment to me: 'Hmm... your game against Kramnik... hmm... you *even* played it consistently!'

■ ■ ■

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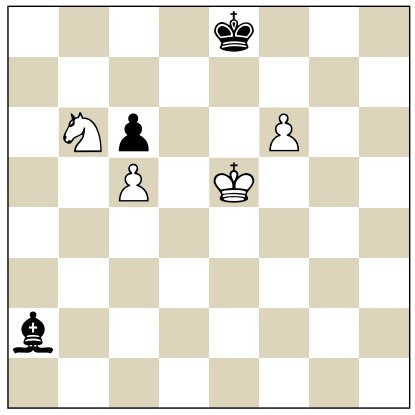
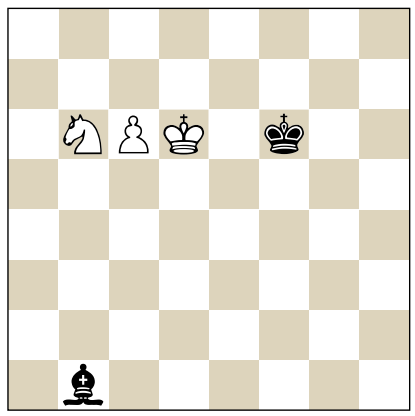
The first round also saw an interesting ending between Anand and Topalov.



Anand-Topalov
Monaco blindfold 2011 (1)
position after 61...♔e8

This position is winning for White and the simplest method is to transfer the knight to g5; for example, 62.♘c8 ♗d5 63.♘d6+ ♔f8 64.♘e4 ♗c4 65.♘g5 ♗d5 66.♔d6 ♗g2 67.f7 ♗d5 68.♔d7. Now Black is in zugzwang and must either surrender the c-pawn or allow the decisive ♔e6.
However, Anand decides to swap the c6 and f6 pawns, in the mistaken belief that the resulting ♘+♙ v ♗ position is a win.
62.♔d6?! ♔f7 63.♔xc6?
White could still have returned to the correct plan by 63.♘d7 ♗d5 64.♔e5, followed by playing the knight round to d6 and ultimately g5.
63...♔xf6 64.♔d6 ♗b1!
The only move to draw.
65.c6



65...♗d3?
Perhaps surprisingly, it's necessary to force the pawn onto the seventh rank in order to draw: 65...♗e4! 66.c7 ♗b7 67.♔d7 ♔e5 68.♘a4 ♔d5 and Black

is just in time to prevent the decisive ♘c5.

66.♘d7+!

After this check, the black king has to retreat since 66...♔f5 67.♘c5 and 66...♔f7 67.♘e5+ lose instantly.

66...♔g7 67.♘c5

Black resigned. White wins after 67...♗f5 68.c7 ♗c8 69.♔e7 ♔g6 70.♔d8 followed by ♘d7.

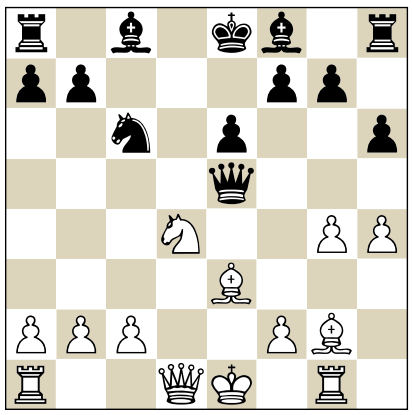
By the end of the third double round, the general outlines of the tournament were already taking shape, with Carlsen and Aronian in joint lead with 4½/6, and the rest of the event was very much a race between these two. The game of the day featured a beautiful mating finish.

SI 20.5 – B81
Vugar Gashimov
Anish Giri
Monaco blindfold (3) 2011

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 e6 3.♘f3 d6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4 ♘f6 6.g4 h6 7.h4 ♘c6 8.♖g1 d5 9.exd5 ♘xd5 10.♘xd5 ♕xd5

This has been played many times, but Black's results are rather poor, and 10...exd5 11.♗e3 ♗e7 is at any rate more solid.

11.♗g2 ♕e5+ 12.♗e3



12...♕h2!?

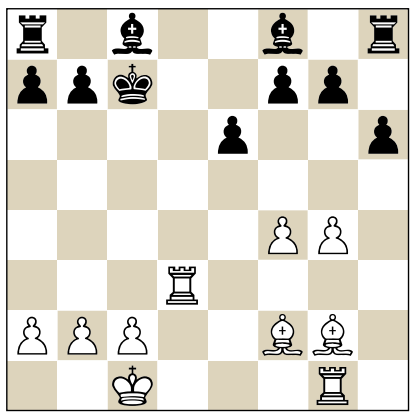
An interesting idea aiming to revive this line for Black. Although it led to disaster in this game, it may well be Black's best option. The alternative 12...♗d7 13.♘xc6 ♗xc6 14.♗xc6+ bxc6 15.♕d4 gives White a nagging edge in the endgame, while the odd-looking 12...♘b4 is well met by 13.♕e2 ♗d7 14.f4 ♕a5 15.c3.

13.f4 The most consistent continuation. White offers a pawn to secure a considerable lead in development.

13...♘xd4

13...♗d7 14.♕d2 ♘xd4 15.0-0-0! ♗c5 16.♗xd4 ♗xd4 17.♕xd4 gave White a clear advantage in Ruan Lufei-Hou Yifan, Antakya 2010.

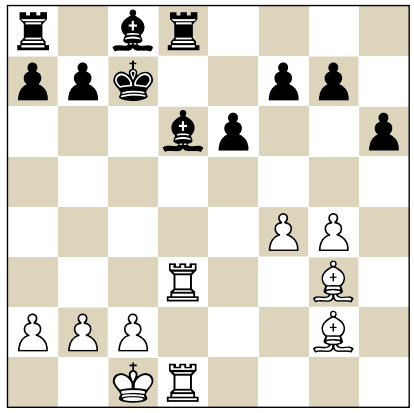
14.♕xd4 ♕xh4+ 15.♗f2 ♕d8 16.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 17.0-0-0+ ♔c7 18.♖d3



White clearly has enough for the pawn, but it isn't easy to prove an advantage.

18...♗d6 19.♗g3 ♖d8 20.♖gd1

The crucial moment. Black must counter the threat of 21.♖xd6 ♖xd6 22.f5.



20...f6?

20...f5! was correct, firmly blocking the h2-b8 diagonal, and aiming to unpin by ...♗e7. White can force a draw by 21.♖c3+ ♔b8 22.♖cd3 ♔c7, but it is doubtful if he can achieve anything more.

21.f5 e5 22.♗e1!

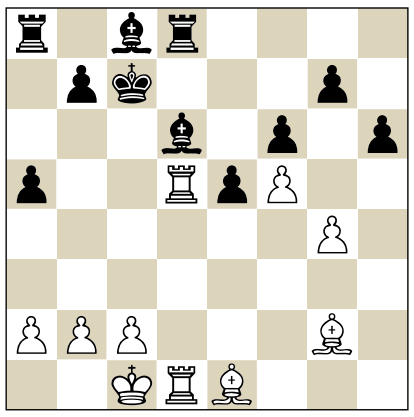
Switching the bishop to the queenside diagonals causes serious problems for Black. The immediate threat is 23.♗b4, and 22...♗e7 loses to 23.♗a5+ b6 24.♖c3+ ♔b8 25.♖xd8 ♗xd8 26.♗b4.

22...a5 The only move, stopping the check on a5 and preparing to activate the rook via a6.

23.♖d5

JANIS NISII

Vishy Anand and Anish Giri contribute their share to the convivial mood in the VIP-room.



23...e4?

Reopening the dangerous h2-b8 diagonal has fatal consequences. The last chance lay in 23...h5 24.♗xa5+ ♖xa5 25.♖xa5 hxg4, although White retains some advantage after 26.♗e4.

24.♔b1

Stopping the check on f4 and threatening to win by c4-c5.

24...e3 25.♗f1 ♖e8

This allows a beautiful finish, but even the best defence 25...b5 should lose after 26.♗e2 ♗b7 27.♖xb5 ♖d7 28.♗xa5+ ♔c8 29.♗b4.

26.♖xd6! e2 27.♗xe2 ♖xe2 28.♗g3 ♖g2

Black's moves are all forced.

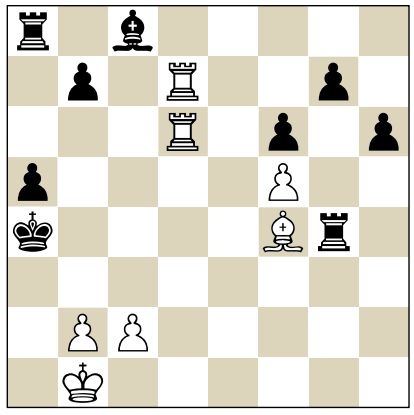
29.♗f4

This preliminary move is necessary in order to secure a check on the g1-a7 diagonal.

29...♖xg4 30.♖d7+ ♔c6

Now 30...♔b6 loses to 31.♗e3+.

31.♖1d6+ ♔b5 32.a4+ ♔xa4



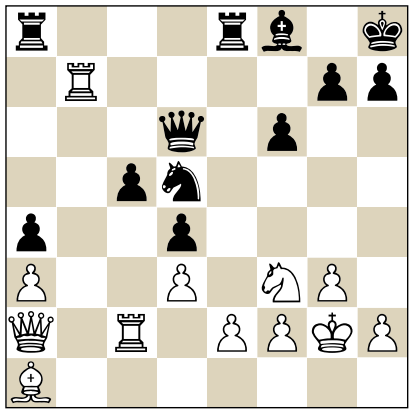
33.♖b6! ♖xf4

Or 33...♗xd7 34.b3+ ♔a3 35.♗c1 mate.

34.♔a2

Black resigned. It's mate in at most two more moves.

The fourth round didn't change the situation, but in the fifth round Carlsen suffered a 2-0 defeat at the hands of Ivanchuk, which allowed Aronian to secure a substantial lead by winning both games against Gashimov. In the sixth round Carlsen was able to narrow the gap to a point since Aronian could only make half a point against Grischuk. The gap closed again in Round 7, with Aronian retaining the slimmest lead over his Norwegian rival, a situation which remained unchanged in Round 8. In this round Giri, who was not having a very happy time, at least managed to pull off a neat win.



Giri-Karjakin
Monaco rapid 2011 (8)
position after 25.♔c2

The position is roughly equal. The bishop on a1 is buried, but White's other pieces are all active and Black has to take care to defend his a-pawn.

25...g5?!

Black plans to displace the knight from f3 and drive it to an inferior square, but this advance weakens the long diagonal and allows White to activate the a1 bishop.

26.e4!

Black is forced to take, since 26...♘c7 27.♘xd4 and 26...♘e7 27.♕f7 are hopeless, but now the a1 bishop is transformed into the strongest piece on the board.

26...dxe3 27.♘xg5

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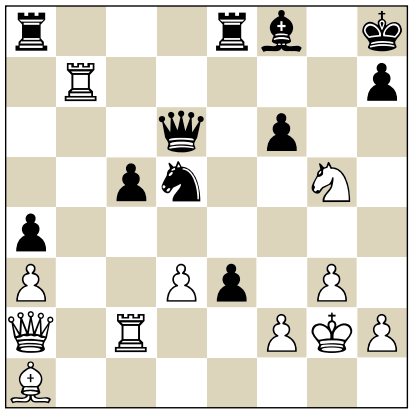


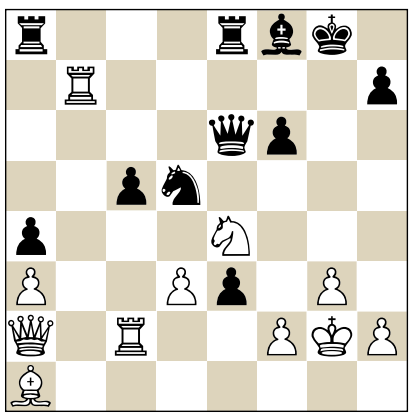
27...♔g8?

This should lose. The best line was the remarkable defence 27...♘f4+! 28.♔g1 (28.gxf4 ♕c6+ 29.♔g3 ♕xb7 30.♗xf6+ ♗g7 31.♘f7+ ♔g8 32.♘d6+ ♕b3 33.♘xe8 ♖xe8 34.♗xg7 ♕xa2 35.♖xa2 ♔xg7 is very drawish) 28...exf2+ 29.♖xf2 ♖e1+ 30.♖f1 ♖xf1+ 31.♔xf1 ♕xd3+ 32.♔f2 ♕d5 33.♕xd5 ♘xd5 with good drawing chances for Black.

28.♘e4?!

The pinned knight on d5 suggests that the position is ripe for a decisive combination, but White does not find the most efficient way. 28.♖b6! would have been instantly deadly; for example 28...♕xb6 29.♕xd5+ ♔h8 30.♖b2 ♕a6 31.♖b7. However, the move played is also enough for a decisive advantage.

28...♕e6



29.♖d7?

An echo of the combination mentioned in the previous note, but this version is far less effective. 29.♗xf6! exf2 30.♖xf2 ♘e3+ 31.♔f3 ♕xa2 32.♖xa2 ♘d5 33.♗g5 gives White excellent winning chances in view of his very active pieces and threats to Black's king. Note that 29.♕xd5?? doesn't work as 29...♕xd5 pins the knight.

29...♖ad8? Now White wins after all. **30.♖xd5 ♕xd5 31.♕xd5+ ♖xd5 32.♘xf6+ ♔f7 33.♘xd5 e2 34.♗c3 e1♕ 35.♗xe1 ♖xe1 36.♘c3** Black resigned.

The ninth round proved crucial, as Carlsen lost with white against Anand, and although he won the second game his slip allowed Aronian to extend his lead to a whole point by beating Kramnik 1½-½.

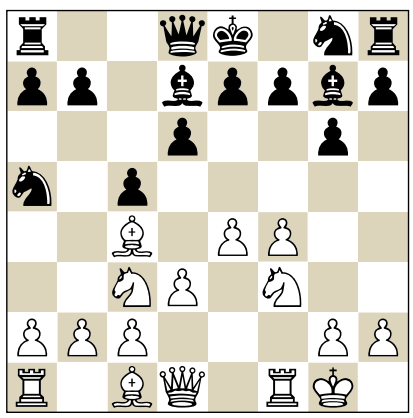
NOTES BY
Vishy Anand

SI 49.8 – B23
Magnus Carlsen
Vishy Anand
Monaco blindfold 2011 (9)

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 d6 3.f4

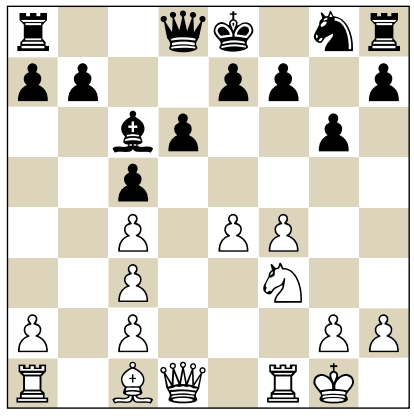
The previous day Carlsen had beaten Topalov in this so-called Grand Prix Attack, which I thought was cute. I hadn't even realized he played that opening. I did a little bit of work and it was only then that I noticed that this had been played quite a bit recently, for example in a game between Wojtaszek and McShane that I had seen in Wijk aan Zee without paying much attention.

3...g6 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.♗b5+ ♗d7 6.♗c4 ♘c6 7.0-0 ♘a5 8.d3



After he played this move, the first thing that sprang to mind was: Can't Black take on c4, take on c3 and won't it be one of the best Nimzo's you will ever see then? I took it a bit further, but essentially I thought that this must be fantastic for Black and moved on. I don't know what Magnus thought about this. It's not a very difficult thought. The question is only whether you pause there and take a look or just breeze past.

8...♘xc4 9.dxc4 ♗xc3! 10.bxc3 ♗c6



Now we basically have one of the best Nimzo-Indians you can think of for Black. The reason I keep harping on that is that if you move the white pawn from c2 to d5, and the black bishop is somewhere else (on a6 or elsewhere), then that is what you usually get in a Nimzo. So you can understand how much the white position has deteriorated by having the pawn on c2 instead of on d5. Immediately after the game my comment was that White was bust here. That is probably too strong, but at any rate this is an excellent position for Black.

11.e5

White cannot move his c-pawns, so he has to do as much as possible with the other two. The idea is to keep the black knight from coming to f6 and developing naturally.

11...♕c7

Therefore 11...♘h6 was also an interesting option. Or 11...♕d7 12.♕e2 0-0-0 13.♘g5, which actually is slightly awkward. Black is fine, but it gives White some play.

12.♕d3 f5

The text-move is cleaner than 12...0-0-0 13.♘g5, when the tactics

again become a bit awkward after for instance: 13...♖f8 14.exd6 ♕xd6 15.♕h3+ e6 16.f5 gxf5 17.♗f4 ♕e7 18.♕e3!. And, again, 12...♘h6 is a sensible alternative.

13.♘g5 h6

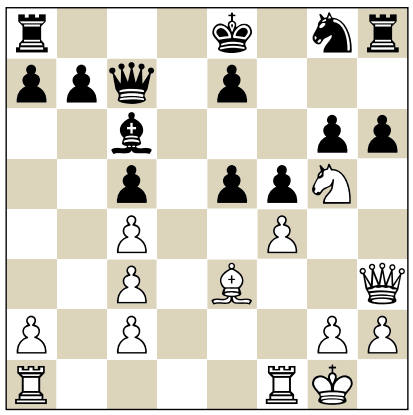
Even stronger was 13...dxe5 14.fxe5 (14.♘e6? is a mistake, because of 14...♕c8! 15.♘xc5 ♗xg2, and White is just lost) 14...h6 15.♘f3 e6 16.♖d1 ♖d8, and this is very pleasant for Black.

14.♕h3

I thought he could 'punish' my 13...h6 by coming back: 14.♘f3 0-0-0 15.♕e3 ♗xf3 16.♕xf3 dxe5 17.fxe5 e6, and my knight will not come into play easily, as the h6-square is not available. But Black is still better, as he will follow up with ...g5 etc.

14...dxe5 15.♗e3

After 15.fxe5 ♕xe5 16.♗f4 I just sacrifice the exchange: 16...hxg5! 17.♗xe5 ♖xh3 18.gxh3 ♔f7, and my knight comes to f6 and e4 and Black wins with his passed f- and e-pawns.



15...e4

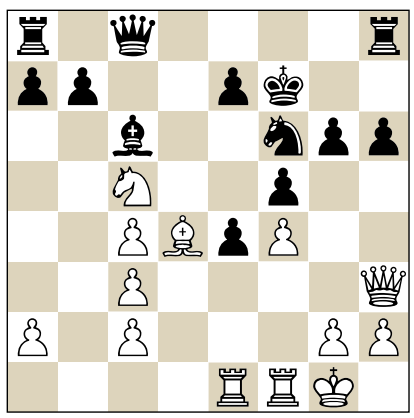
This is a mistake, as it lets a good chance slip. Instead, 15...♗d7! would have more or less won on the spot: 16.fxe5 ♕xe5 17.♗f4 hxg5 18.♗xe5 ♖xh3 19.gxh3 ♔f7, and you can see the conclusion of my previous note.

16.♘e6 ♕c8

Another possibility was 16...♕a5 17.♗xc5 ♔f7 18.♗d4 ♘f6 19.♘c5.

17.♘xc5 ♘f6 18.♗d4 ♔f7 19.♖ae1

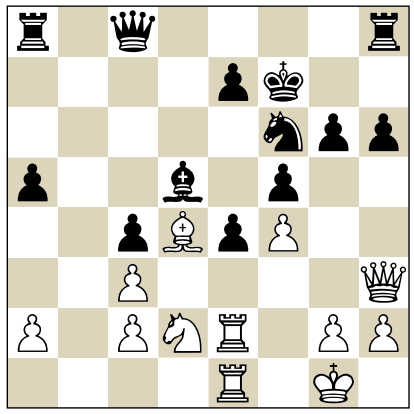
White's position is still bad, but at least his bishop has got a foothold on d4, and, as we will see in the game, the knight has some interesting possibilities.



19...a5

Too much sophistry. Better would have been 19...b6, as I believe that the following knight sacrifice is unrealistic: 20.♘d3 (and after 20.♘b3 ♕a6 21.♘d2 I can just take the pawn, 21...♕xa2, and Black is winning) 20...exd3 21.cxd3 ♕d7 followed by ...♖ae8, and Black should win in the long run.

20.♖e2 b5 21.♘b3 bxc4 22.♘d2 ♗d5 23.♖fe1



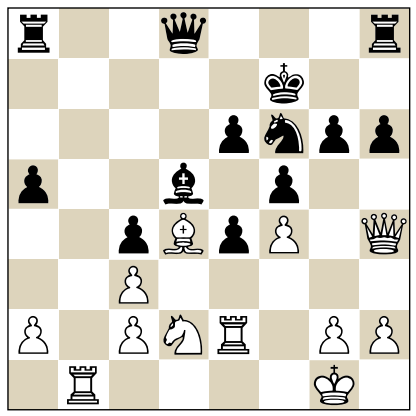
23...♕d8

When he played 21.♘b3 I understood that he wanted to go ♘d2 and ♖fe1, followed by ♘f3, as this was about the only plan left. That's why I played this. However, I think 23...♕c7 was stronger: 24.♕h4 g5! 25.♕h3 e6. White would resign this position if it weren't blindfold. The only danger in blindfold is that at some point you lose control, so it's worth a try. And actually, that was exactly my fear at this point; that this could easily slip out of my hand.

24.♕h4

Renewing the threat.

24...e6 25.♖b1



25...♕e7 As soon as I played this I saw what I had missed: 25...♘h5! would have been extremely good, as it drives White's queen back to f2.

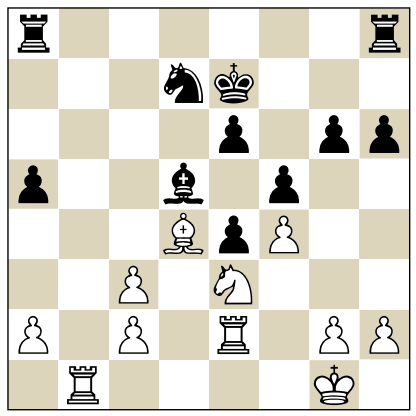
26.♘xc4 And now I had to go:

26...♘d7

What I had seen was 26...♗xc4 27.♖b7? ♕xb7 28.♕xf6+ ♔e8 29.♕xh8+ ♔d7 30.♕f6 (30.♕g7+ ♔c6 31.♕e5 ♕b5) 30...♕b1+ 31.♔f2 ♕d1, and Black wins. But when I played 25...♕e7 I saw that he can start with 27.♗xf6, which messes it up: 27...g5 28.fxg5 hxg5 29.♕xg5 ♖ag8 30.♗xe7 ♖xg5 31.♗xg5 ♗xe2, and the game will end in a draw.

27.♕xe7+ Miraculously, despite my blunder, 25...♕e7, I still have a winning position, since we are at least getting the queens off.

27...♔xe7 28.♘e3



28...♖hb8

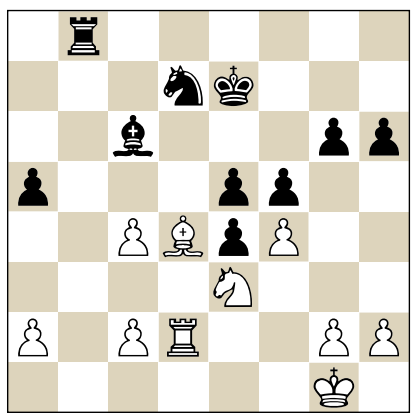
There are opposite-coloured bishops, but eventually Black will get his pawns moving on the kingside.

29.♖xb8 ♖xb8 30.c4 ♗c6 31.♖d2

Instead, 31.♖e1 can be met by 31...e5 32.fxe5 ♔e6. The text allows me to win with 31...e5.

31...e5

Vishy Anand: 'I don't know what I was thinking. I guess it already had been a long blindfold game.'



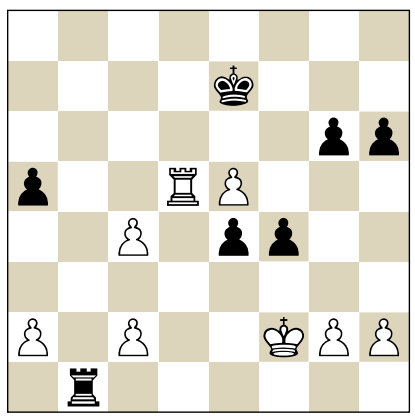
32.♗xe5

Taking with the pawn is out of the question: 32.fxe5 f4 33.♘d5+ ♗xd5 34.cxd5 ♖b1+ 35.♔f2 e3+.

32...♘xe5 33.fxe5 f4 34.♘d5+ ♗xd5 35.♖xd5

Here, too, he cannot take back with the pawn, 35.cxd5, because of 35... ♖b1+ 36.♔f2 e3+.

35...♖b1+ 36.♔f2



36...♖b2??

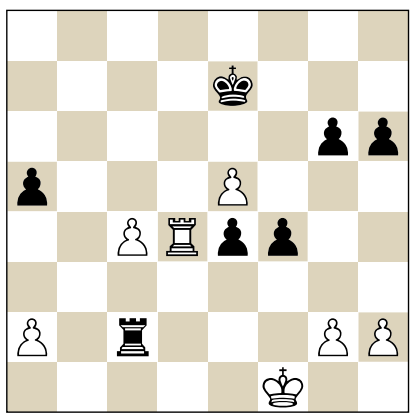
Putting the rook on b2, I manage to find the only square that messes it up, as now after 37.♖d4 e3+ check 38.♔f3 I don't have 38...♖f1 check.

I thought about 36...♖c1 and I even vaguely saw 36...e3+!, which also wins on the spot. I don't know what I was thinking. I guess it already had been a long blindfold game.

37.♖d4

I didn't seem to see matters clearly anymore. I didn't check 37...♖xa2, as I thought it beside the point having just missed two wins.

37...♖xc2+ 38.♔f1



38...f3

This was seen as a mistake, but in fact the real mistake occurs further on.

I could also have maintained some chances with 38...g5, when the following sample line supports this idea 39.♖xe4 ♖xa2 40.♖d4! (40.e6 a4 41.c5 a3) 40...♔e6 41.♖d6+ ♔xe5 42.♖xh6 a4 43.♖a6 ♔d4 44.h3 a3 45.♖a8 ♖a1+ 46.♔f2 ♔xc4.

39.gxf3 exf3 40.♖d6 g5

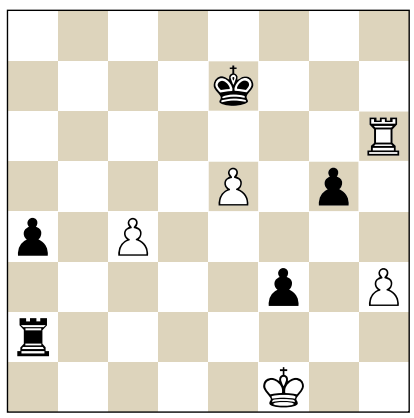
Similar to the game is 40...♖xa2 41. ♖xg6 ♖xh2 42.♖a6 ♖a2 43.♖xh6 a4 44.♖a6 a3 45.c5, with a draw.

41.♖xh6 ♖xa2

If I play 41...g4 he goes 42.a3!, and my rook has to waste a lot of time getting the pawn.

42.h3 a4

As it turned out, it seems that Black is still winning with 42...♖h2! 43.c5 (also winning are 43.♔g1 f2+ 44.♔f1 g4! 45.♖g6 a4 46.hxg4 a3 47.♖a6 a2 and 43.♖a6 ♖xh3 44.♖xa5 g4 45.♖a3 ♔e6 46.♖e3 ♔f5 47.e6 ♔f4) 43...g4 44.♖f6 g3 45.♖xf3 ♖f2+ 46.♖xf2 gxf2, and the black a-pawn decides.



43.♖f6??

He had seen that he could draw with 43.♖a6, but thought he could refine it by first playing 43.♖f6.

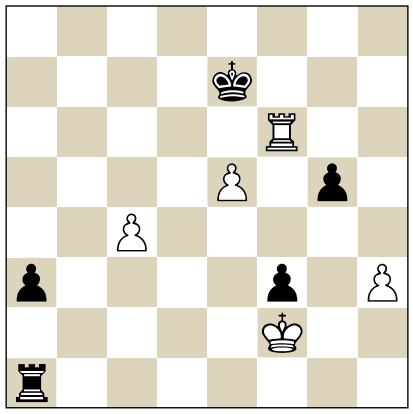
The correct way was 43.♖a6 a3 44. c5 ♖a1+ 45.♔f2 a2 46.c6 ♖h1 47.c7 ♔d7 48.♖a7! ♔c8 (here I had made a miscalculation, as I had not seen that 48...a1♕ doesn't win: 49.e6+ ♔c8 50.♖xa1 ♖h2+, with a draw – after 50...♖xa1 51.e7 the two pawns even win for White) 49.e6 ♖h2+ 50.♔xf3 ♖xh3+ 51.♔e4 ♖h1, with a draw.

43...♖a1+

And now White's problem is that his king cannot go to g2.

If I start with 43...a3 then after 44. ♖xf3 it's a draw: 44...♖a1+ 45.♔g2.

44.♔f2 a3



45.♖a6

White cannot go 45.♖xf3 a2 46.♖a3 ♖h1 and the pawn on a2 is untouchable, because the white king is on f2 and not on g2.

45...a2 White resigned. A good game, which at some point I thought I was going to spoil because of the blindfold, and I did, but luckily in the end I won anyway.

NOTES BY
Magnus Carlsen

RL 12.4 – C86
Vishy Anand
Magnus Carlsen
Monaco rapid 2011 (9)

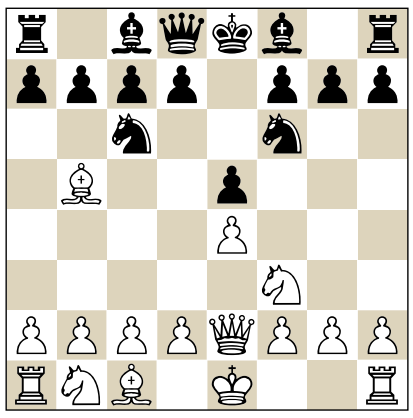
1.e4 e5

After my 100% record with the French Defence was ruined against Karjakin, (to be fair, I was not even close to retaining it) I had to play something else.

2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6

Declaring my readiness to suffer in a slightly worse endgame against the World Champion.

4.♕e2



A surprise; Anand avoids the Berlin endgame from time to time, but usually with 4.d3.

4...a6

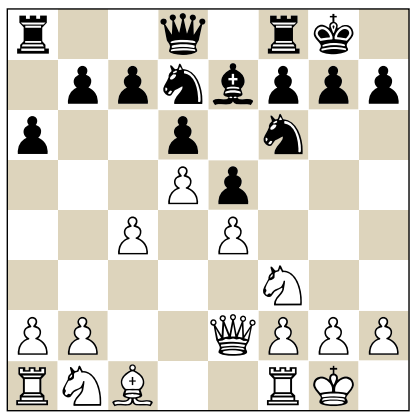
For whatever reason I suddenly got very creative here, starting to consider several reasonable and unreasonable options like ...♕e7, ...♗d6 and ...g6. After a while I came to my senses and played a normal move.

5.♗a4 ♗e7

Most sensible people play 5...b5 first here, and indeed it makes sense not to give White the option of withdrawing the bishop to c2.

6.c3 d6 7.0-0 0-0 8.d4 ♗d7 9.d5 ♘b8 10.♗xd7 ♘bxd7 11.c4

Black should be a little bit worse here. However, as my position seemed a whole lot sounder than it did at this point in the blindfold game (notably, no tripled pawns), I was not that worried.

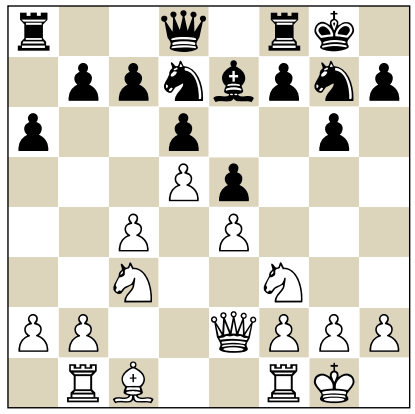


11...g6

I was playing way too quickly around here to consider subtleties like the possibility of playing 11...c5, which closes the position and makes it hard to create anything serious on the queenside for White in the near future. However, when I hit upon this idea a few moves later I also remembered a game Anand-Short with the same structure that Anand won in good style, so I did not really regret choosing another plan.

11...a5 here or on one of the next few moves makes little sense to me, as White will soon play b4 anyway, and I will have given up the b5-square and possibly the a-file for very little.

12.♘c3 ♘h5 13.♖b1 ♘g7



14.b4

14.♘e1, followed by ♘d3, is desirable strategically, but it allows 14...♗g5 and after exchanging the dark-squared bishops Black must be fine.

14...f5 15.♗e3 ♖b8

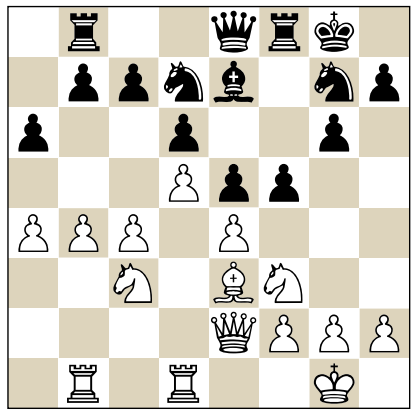
15...♘f6 16.♖fd1 with c5 to come looks very pleasant for White, as I don't really want to take on e4. Thus, the knight is better placed on d7.

16.♖fd1

Considering what happened in the game, it might be suggested that the rook should have been put on c1 instead. The rook would be very useful on d1 if the centre was to be opened, but as soon as I close the position with f4, the rook is naturally not doing much here.

16.c5 dxc5 17.bxc5 f4 works out well for Black.

16...♕e8 17.a4

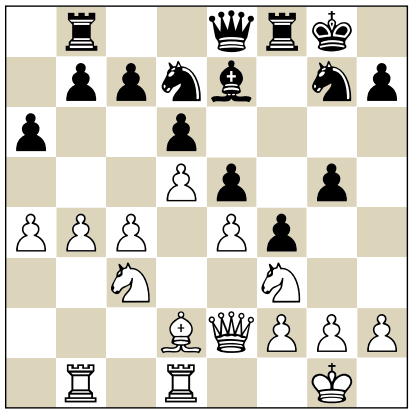


17...f4 There isn't really much else for Black to do here. Without the light-squared bishops White will never be mated on the kingside, of course, but at least I will manage to create some counterplay and not give White a free hand on the kingside.

18.♗d2 g5

Immediately after his blindfold game against Anand, Magnus Carlsen rushed into the VIP-room to show how he could have made a draw. Among his interested audience were Ljubomir Ljubojevic, Veselin Topalov and Spanish novelist Arturo Perez-Reverte.

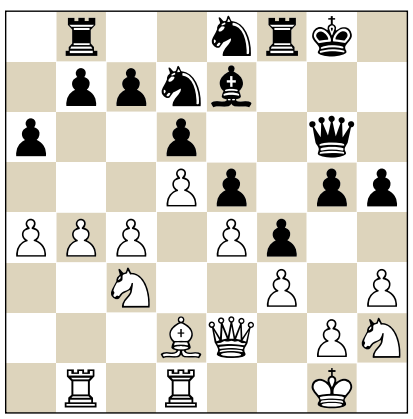
NEW IN CHESS



19.h3

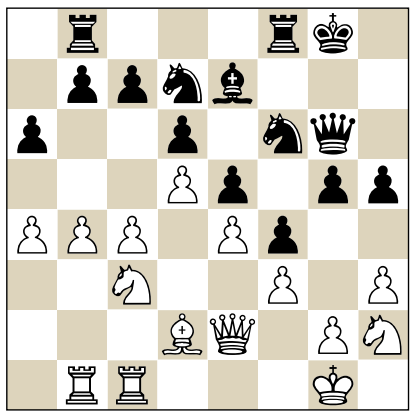
19.♘e1 ♕g6 20.f3 h5 21.♘d3 g4 was another option for White. White is clearly at least OK here, but as long as White is not breaking through on the queenside any time soon Black certainly has chances.

19...h5 20.♘h2 ♕g6 21.f3 ♘e8!



It is important to put this knight, which was just an obstruction on g7, on f6, rather than the other one, which has a very useful defensive function on d7.

22.♖dc1 ♘ef6



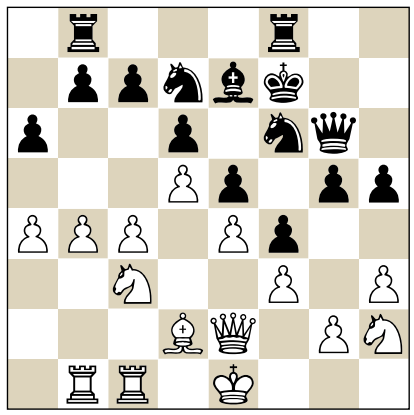
23.♔f1?

The critical moment, where Anand chooses the wrong defensive plan.

23.♘d1, with the intention of putting this knight on f2 and stopping ...g4, would be one move too late: 23...g4 24.hxg4 hxg4 25.♘xg4 ♘xg4 26.fxg4 ♗h4!, followed by ...♘f6, with a very strong initiative.

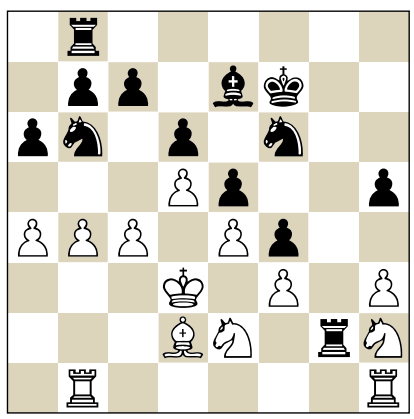
However, 23.♔h1 g4 24.♖g1 would have been better, as Black is not breaking through any time soon, and White might even have ideas of playing g3 at some stage. On the other hand, with the knight on h2 and the rook on g1, White is clearly not going to do any serious damage on the queenside either.

23...♔f7 24.♔e1?!



The continuation of a bad plan. White is not in time to protect everything after Black invades on the g-file.

24...g4 25.♔d1 gxh3 26.gxh3 ♖g8 27.♔c2 ♕g2 28.♖h1 ♕xe2 29.♘xe2 ♖g2 30.♔d3 ♘b6



Now White will lose a pawn by force.

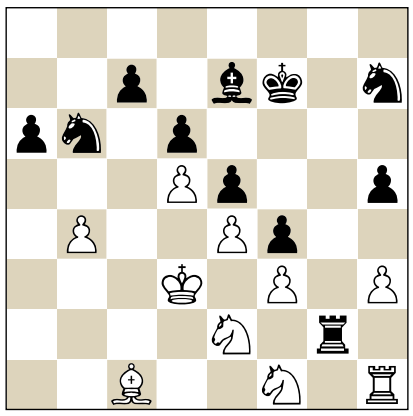
31.♖bg1 ♖bg8 32.♖xg2

32.♘g4 ♖xg1 33.♘h6+ ♔g6 just doesn't work.

32...♖xg2 33.a5

33.♘c3 ♘xc4 is no better.

33...♘xc4 34.♗c1 b5 35.axb6 ♘xb6 36.♘f1 ♘h7

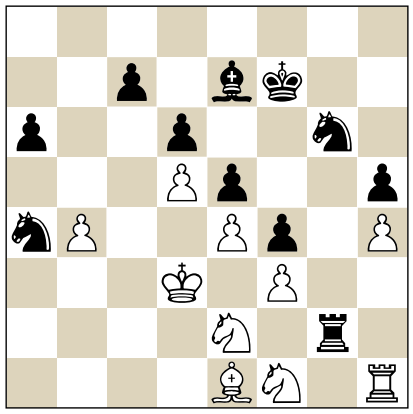


Intending ...♗h4, followed by ...♘g5.

37.h4 And 37.♖g1 ♖f2 doesn't help.

37...♘f8 38.♗d2 ♘g6 39.♗e1 ♘a4

White is almost in complete zugzwang, as it's easy to see neither of his knights can move.



40.♖g1

And after 40.♔d2 ♘b2 his king would have been stalemated too.

40...♖xg1 41.♘xg1 ♗xh4

Black does not have an immediate breakthrough, but with two extra pawns the game is obviously decided.

42.♗d2 ♔e7 43.♘h3 ♔d7

White resigned, as ...c6 is next, and White has no hope of saving the game. A nice, smooth win, even if it was not Anand's finest hour.

■ ■ ■

Aronian defeated Kramnik thanks to an impressive win in the blindfold game..

NOTES BY
Levon Aronian

QO 11.3 – D31
Levon Aronian
Vladimir Kramnik
Monaco blindfold 2011 (9)

1.c4

This game was played in the 9th round. Discovering to his surprise that he and his opponent were at opposite ends of the tournament table, the wise commander of the white pieces decided to choose the quiet English Opening.

1...e6 2.♘c3 d5 3.d4 ♗e7

The choice of the Queen's Gambit Declined did not come as a surprise. Taking into consideration my liking for creating difficulties for myself, my opponents choose quiet variations in the hope that I will confuse myself without their help.

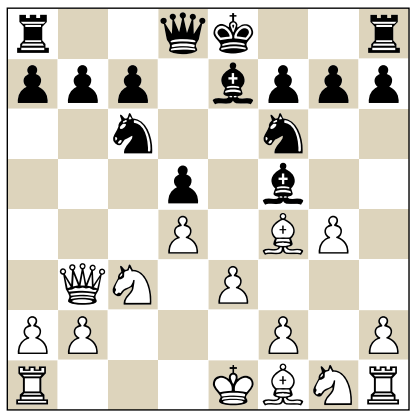
4.cxd5

4.♘f3 leads to more barren positions, but knowing that 4.cxd5 is the most critical move I did not hesitate for long.

4...exd5 5.♗f4 ♘f6

5...c6 is considered passive, but solid. With the move in the game Black tries to solve his problems immediately.

6.e3 ♗f5 7.♕b3 ♘c6 8.g4



The most critical move. 15 years ago a game Topalov-Kasparov was played with this variation, in which Black won.

8...♘xg4

Of course, 8...♗c8 cannot be recommended, since after 9.h3 Black has not achieved much.

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9.♕xd5

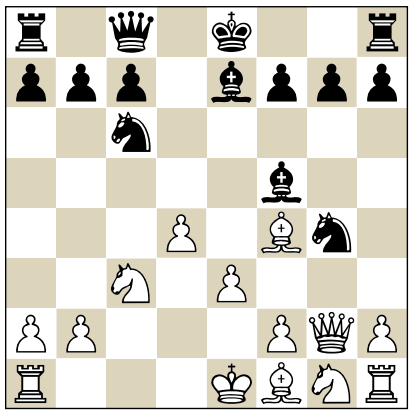
A natural move and a novelty.

9...♕c8

A move aimed at sharpening the play. 9...♕xd5 10.♘xd5 ♗b4+ was more cautious, leading to positions with an insignificant advantage for White.

10.♕g2

From here the fianchettoed queen puts pressure on the centre and keeps the g7 pawn under fire.

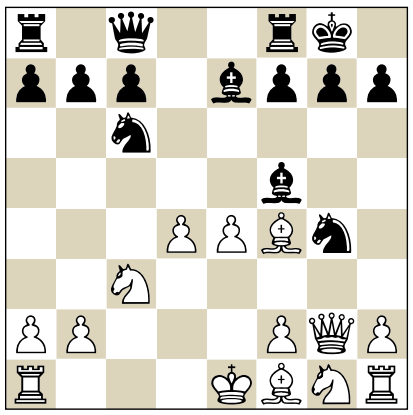


10...0-0

In this position Black has an enormous choice of moves, and most of the variations are very complicated and interesting. At times the computer overestimates Black's position, thinking that the white king, which often remains in the centre, may come under attack.

11.e4

At first sight this move is anti-positional. White has made several moves with his queen and now he urges Black to begin an attack on his uncastled king. But all is not so simple. The queen on g2 controls important squares and in many variations the insecure position of the knight on g4 gives White the saving tempo ♗e2.

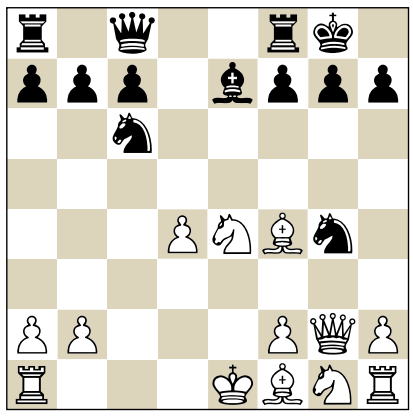


11...♗xe4

Vladimir accepts the challenge. As became clear in analysis, 11...♘xd4 would have led to an advantageous position for White after 12.0-0-0 ♗c5 13.♘f3, while 11...♗g6 would have transposed into a position which could have arisen after 11.0-0-0. White's control of the centre allows him to fight for the advantage.

12.♘xe4

In the analysis after the game Vladimir remarked that he spent a large part of his time analysing the move 12.♕xe4, whereas, relying on my intuition, I did not even consider the capture with the queen. As analysis shows, the problems that White has to solve after 12.♕xe4 ♖e8 are difficult, although with correct play there is nothing fatal for him.



12...♗b4+

I considered this move to be the strongest. The position arising after the almost forced chain of moves 12...♕f5 13.♗d2 ♘xd4 14.0-0-0 ♘xf2 15.♗h6 ♘g4 16.♖xd4 ♘xh6 is not easy to assess. Black supposedly has three pawns for the piece and his pieces are well developed, but the poor placing of the knight on h6 makes White's position more attractive to play.

13.♘c3

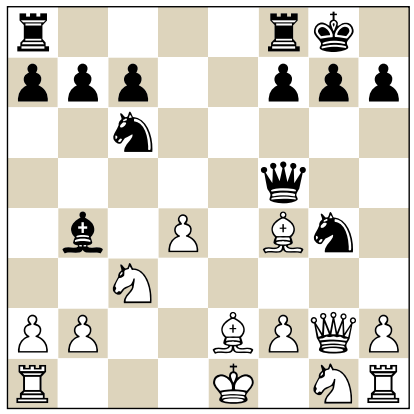
The idea of sheltering the king at f1 appealed to me.

13...♕f5

The correct move. Of course, not 13...♘xd4 because of 14.0-0-0, when White achieves harmony.

13...♖e8+ is not so good, since apart from transposing into the game with 14.♗e2 White can also play 14.♘e2, preparing after 14...♕f5 to play 15.0-0-0. After the possible 15...♗xc3 16.bxc3 ♖xe2 17.♗xe2 ♕xf4+ 18.♖d2 White has the advantage.

14.♗e2



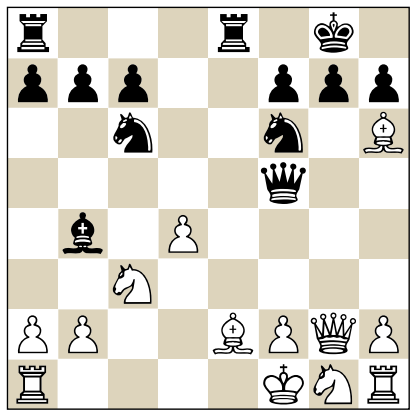
14...♖fe8

An inaccurate move, which allows White to mobilize his forces. The only correct response to the attack on the g4 knight was the defence of it with the pawn. It is on the assessment of the position after 14...h5 15.♕g3 ♘xd4 16.♔f1 that the assessment of the move 11.e4 depends. After analysis I myself did not come to any definite conclusion. This position is more difficult for White to play, but if he can repulse the first wave of activity, I think that the piece will play its part. It should be mentioned that the attempt to mop up the entire queenside by 14...♕c2 is not so effective, because of 15.♔f1 ♕xb2 16.♖b1 ♕xc3 17.♕xg4, when White is close to a win.

15.♔f1 ♘f6

The inclusion of 15...h5 16.h3 does not change things.

16.♗h6



NEW IN CHESS

Levon Aronian: 'The intensive solving of mating problems in recent times was bound to produce a result. The mate in three moves was found.'

16...g6

After 16...♗f8 White can simply develop with 17.♖d1 ♖ad8 18.♘f3, since the attempt by Black to capture something with 18...♕c2 is immediately punished by 19.♗d3 ♕xb2 20.♗xg7 ♗xg7 21.♖g1 ♘h5 22.♕g5 (or 22.♕h3, 22.♕g4) with a mating attack.

17.♕g5

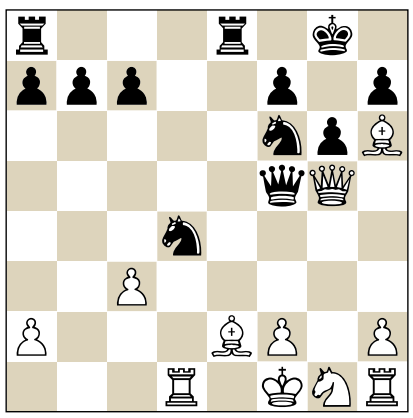
The temptation to exchange the queens was too great, and I decided to give in to it.

17.a3 was more accurate, with the idea of driving the bishop to the more unfavourable square a5 and only then exchanging the queens.

17...♘xd4 18.♖d1 ♗xc3

Vladimir tries to activate his pieces. After 18...♖ad8 19.♕xf5 ♘xf5 20.♖xd8 ♖xd8 21.♗g5 White achieves the desired exchanges.

19.bxc3



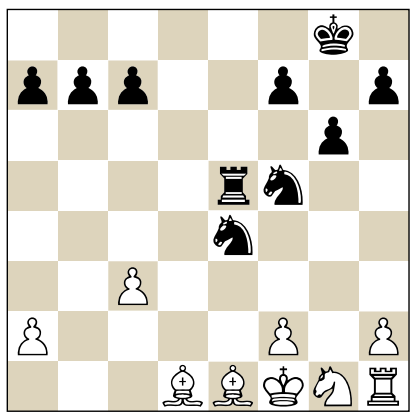
19...♘e4

19...♖xe2 does not help Black, since after 20.♘xe2 ♕h3+ 21.♕g2 ♕xg2+ 22.♔xg2 ♘xe2 23.♖d3 the knight on e2 cannot return home. To be fair, I should mention that I did not notice this tactical stroke, and I only learned of its existence from my opponent after the game.

20.♕xf5 ♘xf5 21.♗d2 ♖ad8

It is understandable that Black should not want to leave such a fine piece alive, but after 21...♘xd2+ 22.♖xd2 ♖ad8 23.♖b2 with the idea of ♘f3 all his activity disappears. Taking into consideration possible surprises typical of blindfold play, Kramnik keeps the agile knight on the board.

22.♗e1 ♖xd1 23.♗xd1 ♖e5



An attempt to remind White about his weak pawns.

24.♘f3

I was sure that the game would last no more than another ten moves or so, and I overlooked Black's next move.

24...♖c5 25.♗b3

Realizing that even without the c3 pawn things were good for me, I decided to activate my pieces.

25...♘xc3

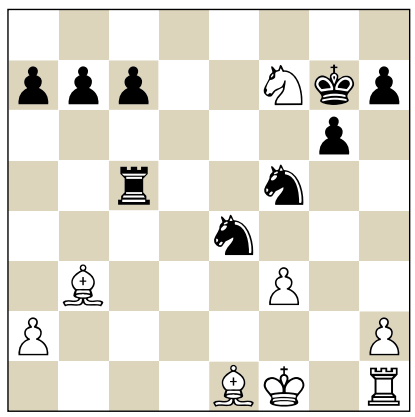
This allows a move after which Black loses any hope of a draw.

After the resilient 25...♘fd6 White's position is technically won, but accuracy is still demanded of him.

26.♘e5 ♘e4

An attempt to confuse matters. After 26...♖xe5 27.♗xc3 the white bishops dominate the position.

27.♘xf7 ♔g7 28.f3



The simplest. The black knights do not have any good squares.

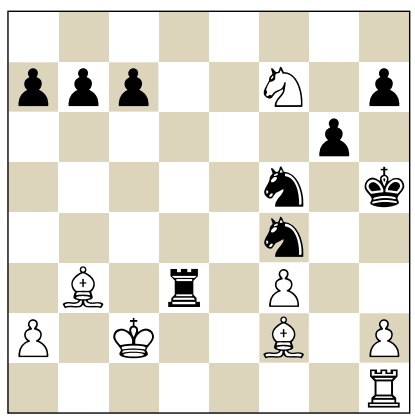
28...♘f6 29.♗f2

Not the most accurate solution, but good enough.

29...♖c3 30.♘g5 ♘h5 31.♔e2

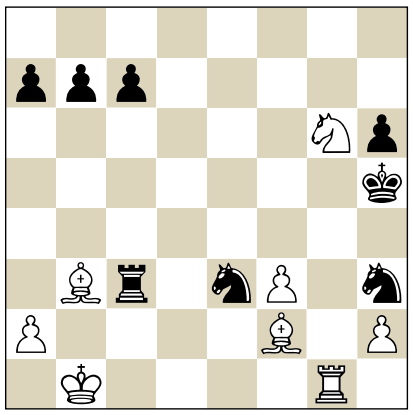
Solving the problem of the king and releasing the rook.

31...♘f4+ 32.♔d2 ♖d3+ 33.♔c2 ♔h6 34.♘f7+ ♔h5



Even in the most difficult positions Vladimir does not lose his sense of humour.

35.♖g1 h6 36.♘e5 ♘e3+ 37.♔b1 ♖c3 38.♘xg6 ♘h3



39.♘f4+

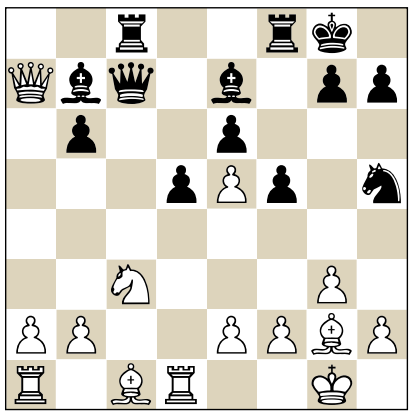
The intensive solving of mating problems in recent times was bound to produce a result. The mate in three moves was found. Black resigned.

■ ■ ■

Round 10 changed nothing from the point of view of the leaders, but Ivanchuk had a fascinating near-brilliancy against Kramnik.

QI 1.3 – E01
Vladimir Kramnik
Vasily Ivanchuk
Monaco blindfold 2011 (10)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.d4 ♗b4+ 5.♗d2 ♗e7 6.♗g2 c6 7.♕c2 0-0 8.0-0 b6 9.♖d1 ♘bd7 10.♗f4 ♗b7 11.♘e5 ♖c8 12.♘c3 ♘h5 13.♗c1 f5 14.♕a4 ♘xe5 15.dxe5 ♕c7 16.cxd5 cxd5 17.♕xa7?!



Objectively speaking a doubtful decision, but very high-class play is required to refute this bold capture. After 17.♗e3 the position would have been roughly level.

17...♗c5!

Best, since 17...♖a8? 18.♘xd5 ♖xa7 (18...exd5? loses to 19.♗xd5+) 19.♘xc7 ♗xg2 20.♘xe6 ♗c6 21.♘xf8 ♔xf8 22.♗e3 leaves White with a clear advantage.

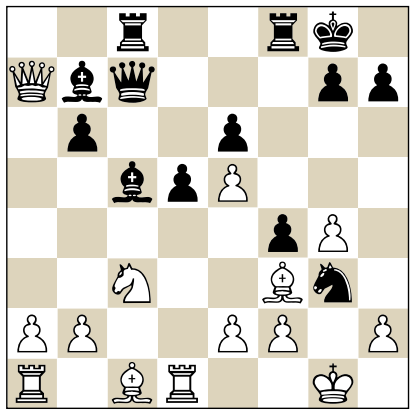
18.♗f3?

White could still have held on, but this requires treading through a minefield: 18.b4! ♗xf2+ (18...♗xb4 19.♘b5 ♕xe5 20.♗e3 is also roughly level) 19.♔xf2 ♕xc3 20.♗d2 ♕xe5 21.♕xb7 f4 22.gxf4 ♖c2 23.e3! (23.♔g1? ♕xe2 24.♕xb6 ♘xf4 25.♗f1 ♕g4+ 26.♔h1 ♕f3+ 27.♔g1 ♖f5 wins for Black) 23...♘xf4 24.exf4 ♕d4+ 25.♔e2 ♕xf4 26.♗xd5 ♕e5+ 27.♔d3 ♖xd2+ 28.♖xd2 exd5 29.♖e1! ♕xe1 30.♕xd5+ ♔h8 31.♔c2 and White is safe.

18...f4 19.g4

White's options are limited because his queen is in constant danger of being trapped by ...♖a8. For example, after 19.♗xh5 fxg3 20.♗f3 gxf2+ 21.♔f1 ♖xf3 22.exf3 ♖a8 White loses because the elimination of his light-squared bishop has deprived him of the ♘xd5 resource.

19...♘g3!



A remarkable position, in which the knight appears bent on suicide, but in fact it is White who is in serious difficulties. His main problem is that the coming ...♘xe2+ will deflect either knight or bishop from control of d5, and thereby permit ...♖a8.

20.b4

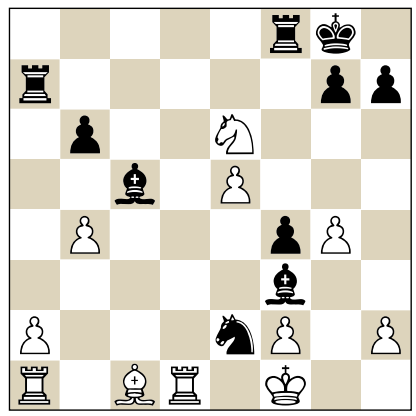
20.hxg3 fxg3 21.♔g2 ♖xf3 22.exf3 d4 is very dangerous for White; the main line runs 23.♕a4 ♕f7 24.♖d3 gxf2 25.♔xf2 dxc3+ 26.♔g3 ♖f8 27.♖xc3 ♗xf3 28.♕f4 ♕g6 29.♕xf8+ ♔xf8 30.♖xf3+ ♔g8 followed by ...h5, with a large advantage for Black thanks to White's exposed king.

20...♖a8 21.♘xd5 ♘xe2+ 22.♔f1

22.♗xe2 loses to 22...exd5 so White has to move his king.

22...♖xa7 23.♘xc7 ♗xf3 24.♘xe6

24.♘b5 is marginally better, but 24...♘d4 25.♘xd4 ♗xd1 26.bxc5 ♗xg4 27.cxb6 ♖b7 should be winning for Black all the same.



24...♘c3?

After playing amazingly well for a blindfold game, Ivanchuk misses the winning line and fails to cash in on his previous play. 24...♗xb4! 25.♘xf8 ♗c3 would have led to a decisive material advantage.

25.bxc5 ♘xd1 26.cxb6 ♖a4 27.♘xf8 ♔xf8 28.♖b1

The powerful passed b-pawn compensates for the minus piece and forces Black to play for perpetual check.

28...♖xa2 29.b7 ♖xf2+ 30.♔e1 ♖e2+ 31.♔f1 ♖f2+ 32.♔e1

Draw. The kind of tactical struggle which often enlivens blindfold play and which one rarely sees in classical tournaments.

As the last round started the Armenian was still a point ahead. Closing a gap of a whole point in only two games would be a tall order for Carlsen, and when he lost the first game against Gelfand the tournament was decided,

since Aronian's draw against Karjakin left him 1½ points in front.

KI 77.4 – E60
Magnus Carlsen
Boris Gelfand
Monaco blindfold 2011 (11)

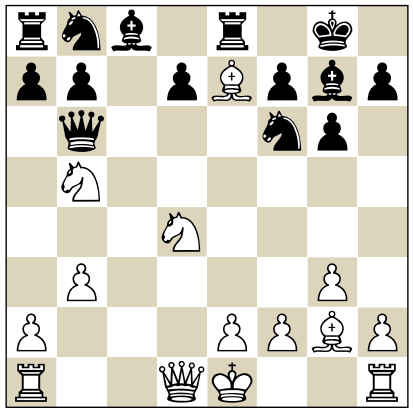
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘f3 ♗g7 4.g3 0-0 5.♗g2 c5 6.♘c3 cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♕c7 8.♘cb5

Surprisingly, this move has only been played once before. If White wants to sacrifice a pawn, then 8.♘db5 ♕xc4 9.b3 looks more promising, but White can perfectly well play safe with 8.b3.

8...♕xc4 9.b3

The sole example of 8.♘cxb5 continued 9.♗d2 ♘c6 10.♖c1 ♕xa2 11.♖a1 ♕c4 12.♖c1 ♕a2 13.♖a1 ♕c4 and a draw was agreed in Edzgveradze-Kovchan, Alushta 1999.

9...♕c5 10.♗a3 ♕b6 11.♗xe7 ♖e8



A double-edged position. White has regained the pawn and inflicted an isolated pawn on Black, but for the moment his pieces lack coordination.

12.♘d6?!

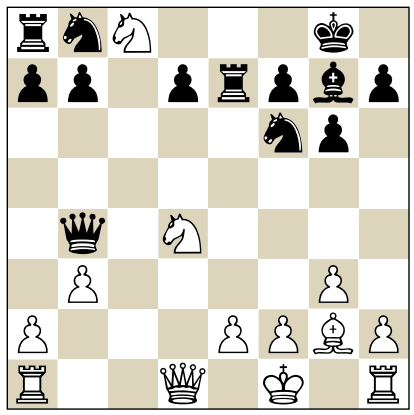
12.♗d6 a6 13.♗c7 ♕c5 14.♗d6 was objectively the most reasonable continuation, but Carlsen, needing a win, had to try something different.

12...♖xe7 13.♘xc8 ♕b4+

13...♕a5+? 14.♔f1 is bad as there is no good answer to the attacks on b7 and e7.

14.♔f1

14.♕d2? ♕xd2+ 15.♔xd2 ♘e4+ 16.♔e1 (16.♔e3? ♗xd4+ 17.♔xd4 ♘c6+ wins material) 16...♖e8 17.♖d1 ♘a6 18.♗xe4 ♖xe4 19.♘b5 ♖xc8 20.♘d6 ♖ee8 gives Black the better ending.



14...♖e4!

With the queen on b4, the d4 knight is under attack and White is forced to react straight away.

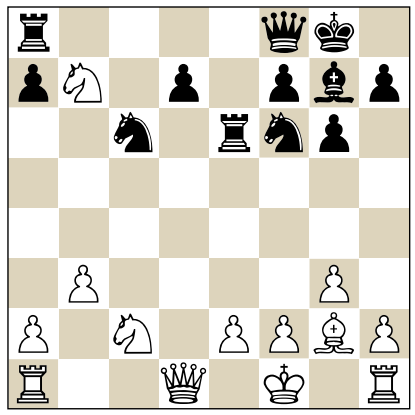
15.♘c2

The best reply, as 15.♗xe4 ♘xe4 16.e3 ♘c6 17.♘xc6 bxc6 18.♖c1 ♖xc8 19.♕xd7 ♕b8 concedes a larger advantage to Black.

15...♕f8 16.♘d6

At this stage White is only slightly worse, and after 16.♗xe4 ♘xe4 17.♕d5! ♘c6 18.♕xe4 ♗xa1 19.♘xa1 ♖xc8 20.♘c2 he has every chance of equalising. However, the move played is also not bad.

16...♖e6 17.♘xb7 ♘c6



White is a pawn up, but his b7 knight has no retreat and his king is misplaced.

18.♖c1?!

18.b4 ♘xb4 19.♘xb4 ♕xb4 20.♖b1 ♕e7 21.♕d3 d5 22.♗f3 ♖b8 23.♘a5 ♖xb1+ 24.♕xb1 looks sounder; White still has to complete his development, but I doubt if he faces serious problems.

18...♖b8 19.♘d4 ♖xb7 20.♘xe6 fxe6

Black has two knights for a rook and a pawn but, importantly, White must still get his king into safety and develop the h1 rook.

21.♗xc6 dxc6 22.♕d4?

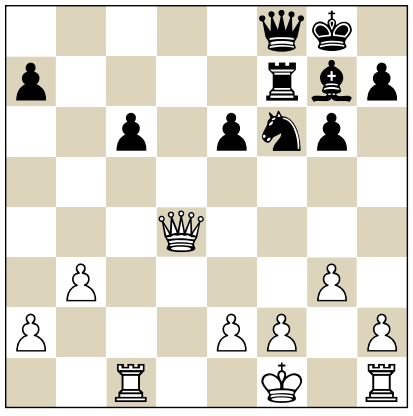
22.♕d3 would have offered better defensive chances.

22...♖f7

NEW IN CHESS

Vasily Ivanchuk, the only player to have taken part in all twenty Amber tournaments, photographed on the day that he celebrated his 42nd birthday.

Giving White a second chance. 22...♘d5 23.♕e4 ♖f7 24.♕xe6 ♔h8 25.♖xc6 ♖xf2+ 26.♔e1 ♘c3 27.♖c8 ♖xe2+ 28.♕xe2 ♕xc8 would have simplified the position and left Black with a large advantage.



23.♔g2?

The final error. After 23.♖xc6! ♘d5 24.♕c5 ♕xc5 25.♖xc5 ♗d4 26.♖c8+ ♔g7 27.f3 White should have no problems.

23...♘d5 24.♕c5 ♕xc5 25.♖xc5 ♗d4

Black has a winning position and finishes efficiently.

26.♖xc6 ♖xf2+ 27.♔h3 ♖xe2 28.♖f1 h5 29.♖fc1 ♔g7 30.♖1c2 ♖xc2 31.♖xc2 e5 32.♖c6 ♘b4 33.♖c7+ ♔f6 34.a3 ♘d5 35.♖c6+ ♔f5 36.♔g2 e4 37.♔f1 e3 38.♔e1 ♔e4 39.♖d6 g5 40.b4 ♘c3 41.♖g6 g4 42.♖h6 ♔d3 43.♖xh5 ♘e4 44.♖d5 ♘d2

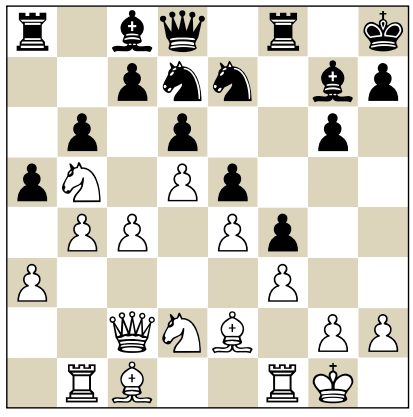
White resigned.

Nakamura scored a nice win against Kramnik using his favourite King's Indian Defence.

KI 7.3 – E97
Vladimir Kramnik
Hikaru Nakamura
Monaco rapid 2011 (11)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.d4 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘d2 a5 10.a3 ♔h8 11.♖b1 ♘d7 12.b4 f5 13.f3 f4 14.♘b5 b6 15.♕c2

This position can arise via different move-orders. In the past, Black has played mainly 15...g5 with a typical example being 16.c5 dxc5 17.bxc5 ♘xc5 18.♘c4 ♗a6 19.♖d1 ♗xb5 20.♖xb5 ♘b7, Ostenstad-A.Kuzmin, Biel 1990. I feel that White is likely to be better here despite being a pawn down. He has plenty of active play on the queenside and in the centre, while the disappearance of Black's light-squared bishop reduces his activity on the kingside.



15...a4!?

A new idea, which makes it hard for White to achieve anything on the queenside. His usual plan is to sacrifice a pawn by c5, and follow this up either by ♘b3, or by a4 and ♗a3. By advancing his a-pawn, Black prevents both these follow-ups and so more or less nullifies the c5 plan. The downside, of course, is that White can play to win a pawn by ♘c3.

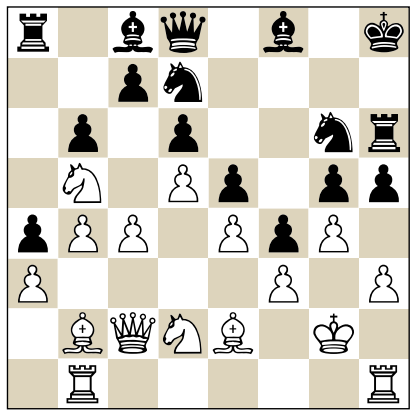
16.♖d1

Ignoring the challenge looks wrong. After the game, Kramnik said that after 16.♘c3 g5 17.♘xa4 ♘f6 18.c5 g4 he would just be mated, but that isn't so clear to me and, in any case, if White does not do this then Black's plan will have succeeded.

16...g5 17.g4

Playing to block the kingside, but in this line it's difficult to totally prevent Black's kingside play. White has much better chances with this type of plan when his dark-squared bishop is on f2, but from its current position the bishop has trouble reaching the kingside, if only because the d2 knight doesn't have a good square.

17...h5 18.h3 ♖f6 19.♗b2 ♖h6 20.♔g2 ♘g6 21.♖h1 ♗f8



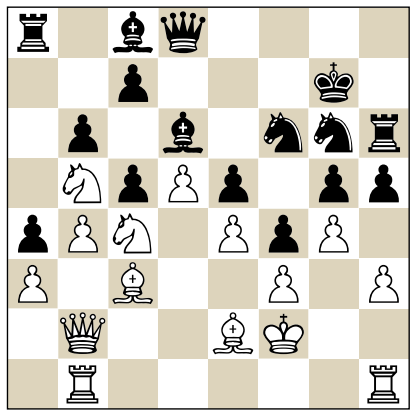
22.♔f2

It's hard to find a good plan for White, since Black can steadily increase the pressure by ...♘f6 and ...♕e7-h7, when White has to worry not only about the h-file pressure, but also about the possibility of a sacrificial breakthrough on f3 and g4.

22...♘f6 23.c5!?

Now that the d7 knight has moved away, White can consider this move. He could have played 23.♖bg1 followed by transferring his queen to the kingside and running with the king to the queenside, but he understandably did not like such a passive plan.

23...dxc5 24.♘c4 ♗d6 25.♗c3 ♔g7 26.♕b2



26...cxb4 27.axb4

27.♗xb4 ♗xb4 28.♕xb4 hxg4 29.hxg4 ♖xh1 30.♖xh1 ♗xg4 31.fxg4 ♘xe4+ 32.♔e1 ♘g3 is also very unclear.

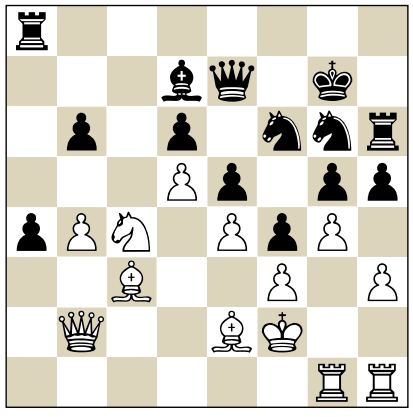
27...♕e7 28.♖bg1?

This move reinforces g4 to prevent a possible sacrifice there, but it is insufficiently energetic. 28.♘bxd6 cxd6 29.b5 (29.♘xb6?? loses to 29...♕a7) was more to the point, to step up the pressure against d6 by ♗b4 and ♕a3.

Then 29...a3 30.♘xa3 hxg4 31.hxg4 ♖xh1 32.♖xh1 ♗xg4 33.♗b4 ♗xf3 34.♗xf3 g4 35.♘c4 ♖d8 36.♖g1 is roughly equal.

28...♗d7 29.♘bxd6 cxd6

The tempo White wasted playing his rook to g1 now proves costly, since Black is already threatening to double rooks on the h-file.



30.h4

White tries to solve his problems by force, but the tactics favour Black. 30. b5 a3 31.♘xa3 ♖ah8 32.♕b1 ♕f8, getting ready to switch the queen to the h-file, is also very good for Black.

30...hxg4 31.hxg5 ♘xe4+! 32. fxe4 ♖xh1 33.♖xh1 f3

Black has a decisive attack.

34.♘xb6

34.♗f1 loses to 34...♕xg5.

34...g3+! 35.♔xf3 ♖f8+ 36.♔e3 ♕xg5+ 37.♔d3 ♗b5+ 38.♔c2 ♖f2 39.♗d2 ♖xe2 40.♕c3 g2 41. ♖g1 a3 42.♔c1 ♖xd2 43.♕xd2 a2 44.♔c2 ♕xd2+ 45.♔xd2 ♗f1

White resigned.

This was the third win in four years for Levon Aronian. He was dominant in the blindfold chess, winning that event by a margin of 1½ points without a single loss.

After last year's success, Carlsen seemed slightly disappointed by the outcome, although second place in such company can hardly be considered a failure. His result in the rapid event was an extraordinary 9½/11, winning by an incredible 2½ points, with only his loss to Ivanchuk a blot on an otherwise flawless performance.

Vishy Anand was the only other player to make a plus score, and his third place was achieved in solid fashion. Vasily Ivanchuk started with 1½/6 and did well to climb up to 50%, but he couldn't repeat the magic of 2010.

The main surprise lower down was the next to last place of Vladimir Kramnik; indeed, after eight rounds he was in last place, but a couple of wins near the end enabled him to overtake Anish Giri. Kramnik started badly and seemed unable to get in gear at all, playing uncharacteristically risky and dubious chess, which was duly punished by the opposition. One can't draw any conclusions about his form based on an atypical event such as the Amber tournament, but it is to be hoped that this great player will soon recover his form.

As for the newcomers, Hikaru Nakamura's games were consistently entertaining. His combative and aggressive style, combined with an extreme reluctance to accede to a draw, made him a favourite with the spectators. He finished on 'minus one', not bad at all for a first Amber appearance. Coming soon after his outstanding result at Wijk aan Zee, he is clearly not only a player to be reckoned with but also one who creates positive publicity for chess.

Anish Giri is only 16 and it was perhaps too much to hope that he would do better against the world's top players. He is clearly very talented, with a genuinely quick sight of the board, but he needs to have a less dogmatic attitude to chess.

As the curtain comes down on the Amber events, it's natural to consider their place in chess history. The Amber tournaments were special, even unique, and not only because of the blindfold chess. Speaking to the players about why they liked the event,

Monaco Amber 2011 (Blindfold and Rapid combined) cat. XXI

						TPR
1	Levon Aronian	IGM	ARM	2808	15½	2916
2	Magnus Carlsen	IGM	NOR	2815	14½	2883
3	Vishy Anand	IGM	IND	2817	13	2831
4	Vasily Ivanchuk	IGM	UKR	2779	11	2769
5	Alexander Grischuk	IGM	RUS	2747	11	2772
6	Hikaru Nakamura	IGM	USA	2774	10½	2756
7	Boris Gelfand	IGM	ISR	2733	10½	2759
8	Veselin Topalov	IGM	BUL	2775	10½	2756
9	Vugar Gashimov	IGM	AZE	2746	10½	2758
10	Sergey Karjakin	IGM	RUS	2776	10	2733
11	Vladimir Kramnik	IGM	RUS	2785	8	2667
12	Anish Giri	IGM	NED	2690	7	2644

Monaco Amber 2011 (Blindfold)

			TPR
1	Levon Aronian	8½	2978
2	Vishy Anand	7	2868
3	Alexander Grischuk	6	2808
4	Vugar Gashimov	6	2808
5	Boris Gelfand	6	2809
6	Sergey Karjakin	5½	2769
7	Vasily Ivanchuk	5	2733
8	Hikaru Nakamura	5	2734
9	Magnus Carlsen	5	2730
10	Veselin Topalov	4½	2705
11	Vladimir Kramnik	4	2667
12	Anish Giri	3½	2644

Monaco Amber 2011 (Rapid)

			TPR
1	Magnus Carlsen	9½	3075
2	Levon Aronian	7	2869
3	Vasily Ivanchuk	6	2805
4	Veselin Topalov	6	2806
5	Vishy Anand	6	2802
6	Hikaru Nakamura	5½	2770
7	Alexander Grischuk	5	2736
8	Sergey Karjakin	4½	2704
9	Vugar Gashimov	4½	2707
10	Boris Gelfand	4½	2708
11	Vladimir Kramnik	4	2667
12	Anish Giri	3½	2644

Sharing memories of twenty years of Amber, World Champion Vishy Anand spoke on behalf of the players at the closing dinner in the Salle Belle Epoque of the Hermitage Hotel.

FRED LUCAS

one word kept being mentioned: 'respect'. There's no doubt that the organisers treated the players with unusual courtesy, and this was appreciated by the grandmasters, perhaps more so than the undoubtedly generous financial conditions. Professional organisation, comfortable hotel rooms, attractive scenery and good food all helped to ensure that the participants had a great time and were eager to come back again and again. Of all the world's top players of the past two decades, only Garry Kasparov steadfastly refused to take part, due to his dislike of blindfold chess.

It's impossible to reminisce about the Amber tournaments without mentioning the sponsors, Mr and Mrs Van Oosterom. Sponsors come and go, and no sponsorship lasts forever, but 20 years is a remarkably long time for a sponsor to support a tournament (and the Amber tournaments were only part of their extensive chess sponsorship). The chess world can be truly grateful for the extensive support the Van Oosteroms have provided without asking for anything in return. It's rare to see such generosity these days, when rewards and returns are calculated to the finest detail. I'm sure the chess world wishes them and their daughters, Crystal Kelly and Melody Amber, the best for the future.

What is the legacy of the Amber tournaments? Partly, of course, it is the more than 2,500 games played between the world's top players. It's true that rapid and blindfold games produce few lasting masterpieces, but the Amber tournaments were designed not to create classic games for the benefit of future generations of chess players, but to present chess as a spectacle, entertaining the audience with thrills and spills, and in this they undoubtedly succeeded. In traditional tournaments, the result of many games is clear hours before the game actually finishes, as the players rely on their excellent technique to steer the game to its logical conclusion. In blindfold chess you can never be sure what the result will be right up to the last moment, as several games from this year's event demonstrated. This essential uncertainty means the games retain the audience's attention until the very last move.

When the Amber tournaments started, there was little rapid chess. Since then, rapid events have become an accepted part of the chess scene, although recently several have evaporated like dew in the morning sun. Blindfold chess, on the other hand, has not caught on, and the Amber tournament has remained unique. Perhaps the technical requirements are too daunting for most organisers, but it would be a shame if blindfold chess were to disappear completely. As an example of 'chess as a spectacle' and as a means of attracting publicity, it certainly has a place in the chess world.

There was a feeling of sadness as the computers were switched off and the boards packed up for the last time, but all those who participated in the Amber tournaments will have fond memories of the era when chess came to the Côte d'Azur, and came in style. ■

Viktor Kortchnoi

‘I never was a prodigy in chess’

Twenty years ago, John van der Wiel beseeched Viktor Kortchnoi to keep on playing till he was 80. If that happened he might one day beat his bête noir, when age would inevitably catch up with him. The Dutch grandmaster’s wish was only partly fulfilled. At 80 Kortchnoi is still active, but with a rating of 2557 he is far from a push-over. In Monaco, **Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam** had a long talk with the strongest octogenarian in chess history about a wide variety of subjects. True to character, Kortchnoi didn’t shy away from any subject and spoke his mind, sometimes mercilessly critical, sometimes disarmingly honest. ‘Maybe in a way I am envious of these young players. At their age I played worse than they do.’ And he does worry about his future as a chess player.

FRED LUCAS

Viktor Kortchnoi

The idea itself was brilliant in its simplicity. Or so I thought. What kind of interview should you have with a man that you've already interviewed on numerous occasions, when he turns 80? Toying with various angles the solution suddenly popped up in my mind and stayed there, reassuring me that this approach would guarantee a varied and lively conversation. I didn't even have to prepare for it! We would simply take the questions of the Just Checking questionnaire and use these as launching pads into whichever direction Viktor Kortchnoi or I wanted to go. In this manner we could touch on a wide variety of subjects and let ourselves be surprised by the course of our talk. Indeed, how brilliant and how simple. I was easily persuaded; now I only had to persuade the grand old man himself.

Viktor Kortchnoi came to Monaco as a guest-of-honour of the Amber tournament of his old friend Joop van Oosterom. He'd stay a week and then return to Switzerland a couple of days before his 80th birthday on March 23rd for a weekend of celebrations in Zurich. The day after his arrival on the Côte d'Azur I ventured to reveal my plan when Kortchnoi entered the hospitality lounge. The expression of his face, first friendly and forthcoming, slowly turned gloomy as he listened to my words. He took the list of questions that I handed him, muttered something about a difference between Western and Eastern culture and turned around to go to the room where he and other guests were following the games.

There, with his passion for the game and his continuous commentary, he soon became the centre of all attention. Everyone drank in his words, including the Amber participants, who would sometimes walk in with the sole purpose of listening to his remarks. As is his wont, most of Kortchnoi's attention was aimed at the youngsters, his favourite target being 16-year-old debutant Anish Giri. After all, they had been born in the same city and could converse in Russian. In the first round Kortchnoi loudly called the move that had squandered Giri's advantage in his rapid game against Aronian 'the worst move he had ever seen in his life' and suggested that for making such a move he should in fact lose his St. Petersburg birth rights. The affection and admiration was mutual, as became clear when Giri quipped with typical enthusiasm: 'This Kortchnoi is a tricky guy, he sees fantastic moves!'

Kortchnoi's contribution to the atmosphere of the tournament was immediately beyond any doubt, but my optimism about the interview had not grown – and it received a bad blow when, the next day, he returned the questions dismissing such Western trivialities as an insult to his person. I briefly tried to explain again that the questions would only be the starting point of our talk, but he had made up his mind: 'No, I won't do it.'

I had to wait till the first free day before I got a chance to make it clear that my intentions had been honourable after all. Seated next to Kortchnoi at a dinner in the Mayabay restaurant in Monaco, and exploiting the general good mood that had descended on our table thanks to the exquisite Thai food, I gently brought up the interview again. This time I managed to convince him that I was looking for more than trivia and silly questions. Still a bit reluctant he agreed on two sessions, but warned me that talking about his favourite colour or food would be a waste of time.

I wasn't sure about that, but when he walked in for the first session he immediately freed me of any possible remaining doubts about the first questions to ask. Taking a seat he didn't wait for any question and started to talk without any further ado.

'Before my first match with Karpov in Moscow in 1974, Roshal asked me and Karpov to answer some questions for his newspaper. Let's say, who is your favourite author? Karpov answered: Lermontov. A silly answer, because they studied Lermontov at school. I answered: O'Henry. You understand why, I wanted to understand his humour. Then there was the question: What is your favourite movie? Karpov answered something like a movie about the war with the Germans. As for me, I answered: *The Nights of Cabiria*, which at the time was very fashionable. The leading actress in it was Giulietta Masina, and in a way she was also my favourite actress (*The Nights of Cabiria* was directed by Federico Fellini in 1957; Masina was his wife – DJtG). That was that. I was quite honest and was telling what I was thinking, whereas Karpov was maybe honest, but at the same time he was giving answers the Soviet government would appreciate. So, here you have something to start with. The American O Henry is still my favourite author.'

At the same time one might say that O' Henry was one of the few foreign authors who were translated into Russian, because his humour was innocent and there was no ideology in his writing. He was not exactly controversial.

'This is true. In my autobiography I write that chess was not my only in-

terest. I tried to learn to play the piano and also to be an actor, trying to memorize poetry. I learned a lot of Lermontov by heart, and also Pushkin, and also some modern poets like Mayakovsky and Konstantin Simonov. These days I still like to do this. Whenever I come across interesting poetry I try to learn it by heart. Yes, still. The last were some verses by Tsvetaeva. I remember these lines and from time to time, when I am in the mood, I repeat them.'

Are you in the mood now? Could you say a couple of verses?
'She wrote something about herself. It is difficult for me now, because I don't like to switch from one language to another. (After a brief pause he recites the verses in Russian). These verses are from her to herself. She is looking around her and she sees a person that reminds her of herself. She says, I am so old, I am dead already and so poor, I will have no dress to put on if they lay me into the coffin. She has awful, awful feelings in her soul and she tries to express them somehow in this way so she will not feel so bad inside her soul.'

But then this is something you associate with your own age.
'(Laughs loudly) Maybe, hahaha. This poetry affected me. I don't know.'

It's a very touching image.
'Yeah.'

Is it mainly Russian poetry that you like to read?
'It's much more difficult to learn by heart verses in other languages, but I tried it. I will tell you a story. There was a clairvoyant who said to me that I am getting my knowledge from the cosmos. That sounds very good. When I was very young, I learned a poem by Pushkin, called *Poltava*. Poltava is the place of the battle between the Swedish king and Peter the Great, in 1709. This was the first poem I learned. Two years later I learned another poem, by Lermontov, called *Mtsyri* (The Novice), which is situated in the Caucasus. When I was young, the first woman with whom I had a long and good relationship was a woman from Poltava, and when I was older I got married to a woman who was from the Caucasus. Mmm. When I told the whole story to my son, he asked me: "Have you ever read Goethe?" (Laughs) Because he already knew my connection to Petra. So that was my connection with the cosmos.'

Do you believe that…
'That I get knowledge from the cosmos? Well, I tended to believe that. Everyone tends to, when you get such a compliment.'

Are you religious in any manner?
'Yes. Well, the point is, I was baptized in the Polish church in Leningrad. When I was three years old, they took me to the church and I was baptized or christened. My father had difficulties there. He was working in a factory and his mother went to the Party Committee of the factory and said: "He visited the church! He even brings his son to the church!" I was baptized and my whole life was so strange that if I had not been religious, I surely would have become religious. Let's say, what did the following mean? Petrosian strongly insisted that I get away from the Soviet Union. Several articles appeared in the Soviet press under his name. Something like: It is unfair, dear grandmaster. What was unfair? That I lost a match against Karpov and that I said he was nothing special. It is unfair, dear grandmaster! Petrosian said it and then hundreds and thousands of letters came to the newspapers asking to punish Kortchnoi. They punished me. But when I left, he couldn't play any longer. And it was arranged by somebody, a god, that we played two matches. (The first match was the Candidates' quarter-finals in 1977 in Il Ciocco, where Kortchnoi won 6½-5½; the second match was the Candidates' quarter-finals in 1980 in Velden, where Kortchnoi won 5½-3½ – DJtG.) That's what God inflicted on him. He was an emigrant and he forced me to be an emigrant. I even have the feeling that he never expressed these feelings to anybody, including his own wife. Petrosian was an Armenian. In the Caucasus there

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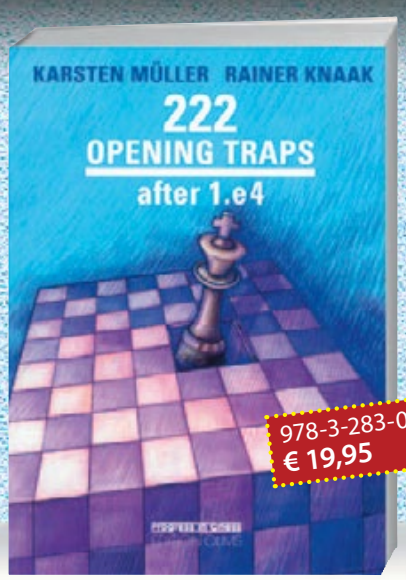

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are several nationalities, Armenians, Georgians, Azerbaijani. They are mixed and Petrosian was born in the Georgian republic. From the very beginning, in a wider sense, he already was an emigrant, having been born in Georgia! Then he moved from the Caucasus to Moscow. He didn't want to live in Armenia, so he moved to Moscow. And there, in Moscow, he felt like an emigrant. That was his own doing, but he was insisting that I get away! He succeeded.

'I don't tell this in my autobiography, but now I think, who on earth had great problems when I left the Soviet Union? Members of my family plus Petrosian. He couldn't play against me any longer. I can tell you a story. The second match against Petrosian was played in Austria, and the chief arbiter was Harry Golombek. Harry Golombek was a great fan of mine. We played nine games and Harry Golombek, my great fan, calculated that in five games of this match I was lost. But I won two games and seven games were drawn and the match was over. So how bad did Petrosian play that he could not win a single game out of the five in which he had a winning position?'

And you think that his living outside his own country for all his life was already a divine punishment in advance?
'Exactly. He lived like a stranger, like a foreigner. And then suddenly he realized he had made me a foreigner. One should not forget something, apparently Petrosian had forgotten that my wife was Armenian…'

I remember you telling me that she looked up to Petrosian very much, because he was the Armenian World Champion, and that you resented that.
'Exactly. She never protested against Petrosian, that is true. But somehow he forced my family to be split and then he could no longer play chess. And sometimes I even think that his illness was the result of our verbal conflict.'

What form has it taken, your religious feeling? Do you think there is a god?
'I don't go to church. There were these gurus, who never spoke about god. They said, the highest being. That also comes into my mind, the highest being, who is ruling the lives of most people.'

Do you speak to this highest being? Or do you pray?
'I do not pray, that is for sure. Do I speak? Well, when people speak to the highest being they beg him to do something. Please do this or that. I think I don't do that. Although I still believe that it or he in a way regulates my life.'

'Sometimes I even think that Petrosian's illness was the result of our verbal conflict.'

Now that you're almost 80, do you think about transcendental things, about afterlife?
'Hahaha. I am not a philosopher, I pretend to be practical. No, I am not a philosopher.'

Do you look at things like age from a very practical perspective?
'Exactly. I have a very interesting relationship with Petra, who suffered from the Soviets and still decided to share her life with a Soviet person. Well, I changed, I am not in the Soviet Union any longer, but still I belong to Soviet society and my cultural level and knowledge is foreign to Petra's. Her life was quite different. Her cultural education is also quite different. That is also strange. And that was perhaps also regulated by the god, I don't know.'

She tries to make you forget things that are remnants from your time in the Soviet Union and tells you: 'Viktor, what you are doing is so Soviet, we are in the West now.'
'Hahaha. Yes, this is her duty to remind me or to educate me in a new way.'

And this is still going on?
'Hahaha. Forever. But this, too, may have been regulated by the highest being.'

That she was sent into your life?
'Yeah, I think so.'

You were willing to leave the Soviet Union, but you needed another force to really drag you away and keep you away?
'Maybe that is her point of view. When I left I had no idea that somebody would change my life. When I left the Soviet Union, I left forever, once and forever. When I came back to the land where I was born, it didn't exist anymore under its old name. In the year 1991 it collapsed, then, the next year, I appeared.'

Do you think that the fact that the country collapsed was the defeat of the country you had been fighting?
'(Thinks briefly and then laughs loudly again) It's nice to see it that way, but I didn't think that way. I just thought the other way around, when the country collapsed, I reappeared. I left once and forever and only showed up in the new country.'

Do you feel it's a new country?
'(Hesitant) No, there is a new name. It has to develop, but that's a different story.'

Let's turn to music then. You said you tried to learn to play the piano. At what age was that?
'Around 13. Look, I was in Leningrad, which was surrounded by German troops for 900 days. Part of my family was Polish, and some of it Ukrainian. I used to talk Polish up to the time that Leningrad was surrounded. Somehow the Polish part of my family all died from hunger, they starved. And since then I have had no practice and have almost entirely forgotten the language. When the siege was broken, I started to develop my hobbies. I started to think I should get an instrument, a piano at home. First I needed some money and some space for the instrument. And I realized this was impossible. So the first thing I dismissed was music. Then I had problems with my poetry. I learned a lot, but I had problems with Russian pronunciation. I visited some specialists, but I failed to improve. That was the second hobby. I taught my son to like music and poetry, that is true. I didn't teach him to play chess, because for me chess was a profession and for him it was just play. At 13 I gave up music, at 14 I gave up poetry. And then I decided to become a chess professional. That was modern thinking at that time, because the only chess professional was Botvinnik, nobody else. But I managed.'

But what kind of music do you love?
'I don't like too loud music, I don't like this modern music, especially computer music. I like music with melody, let's say, all kinds of music. In Russia Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff and in Western music it would be Mozart, Rossini, certainly Verdi, a little bit more romantic. That's what I like.'

Romantic because it may fit in with your mood, or are you a romantic person?
'(Thinks) A romantic person sounds very complimentary (laughs). I should not be too… No, it's OK. Frankly, I believe I am a romantic person and my warm feeling for romantic music shows once again how romantic I am. Let's say, when people look at my chess they also say that I am not too stolid, that I am romantic in my chess, how I play and how I try to play. How to make my romantic ideas come true.'

You briefly talked about your literary preferences. O'Henry belongs to a rather light genre. Are there any of the more serious writers, like Tolstoy or Dostoevsky, that you felt attracted to?
'I have never read Dostoevsky. People in the West like Dostoevsky and I say I never read Dostoevsky. They ask why? I explain that I was a very intelligent child. Perhaps it was because of my father. He made me read newspapers every day and we would discuss what had been written in the newspapers. Most of the books that I read I read when I was young, let's say before I started to play chess seriously. I read a lot of books. Some books young people were not allowed to read, including Dostoevsky, and that's why I never read him. Some books that a 12-year-old boy was not allowed to read I never read.
My father died when I was ten, but he taught me and I already had all these feelings. The last book that I read as a young boy, was when I was in the sixth grade. It took some time, I read *War and Peace* by Tolstoy. Can you imagine? I needed several months. I think that was the last book I read. When I was 12. I just read it… It was a very difficult task, it didn't give me much pleasure.'

Let's go from literary books to chess books. Was there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
'I started to learn chess and started to read books in the war, when it was difficult to find books. There were only second-hand books. There was a lot of suffering in the Soviet Union, about twenty million people died. But chess, it was fantastic, they still had chess competitions in the years 1942, 1943, 1944. In the year 1945 I was a board boy at some tournament during the war. In April 1945, at the semi-finals of the 14th Soviet Championship. To imagine that in those years this horrible fight with the Germans was going on and still competitions were being held. So I started collecting literature. I remember I bought newspapers dedicated to the

NEW IN CHESS

Petra and Viktor Kortchnoi at the London Chess Classic in December 2009.

AVRO tournament of 1938. This really happened, that special newspapers were made in the Soviet Union during that AVRO tournament. I left a lot of things behind when I defected, but I remember some fantastic literature. Among my first books were Emanuel Lasker's manual and Capablanca's manual, and then Tartakower's book dedicated to the tournament in Debrecen, that was all. Those were the first books that I bought and seriously studied. I still remember Dr. Emanuel Lasker saying at the end of the book that he was capable of teaching an ignorant person to play chess in such a way that even a master could not give him the odds of a pawn. In 120 hours. I think I spent more than 120 hours learning everything what was written there.'

You mention Lasker and Capablanca. If you look at the greats in chess, who is the greatest chess player of all time?
'Some say that the most talented of all was Capablanca. Then they start telling you what was particular about Capablanca. I've met people who have seen him and talked to him and those people would say: "When Capablanca saw a position he would put a piece on a square (acts as if he makes a determined move) and then say: 'And then White is winning. If he gets this piece to d4, then White is winning.'" It might not have been easy to find a way to come to d4, but if the knight comes to d4 then really he would win. How fantastic this was. When I listen to this now, I think this is the same as what I am doing. They present a position to me and I put some piece to some important square and say: "Now White is winning." And these people's mouths fall open. But I don't have such tremendous talent as Capablanca. No, I don't think so. Apart from the manuals. I had some books by Alekhine. These books impressed me very much, these games. Some of Lasker's or Capablanca's games had been too complicated to grasp. What was going on? With Alekhine it was much easier to understand the game and to imitate it.'

Was he your inspiration?
'OK, now we're talking about something else. They ask me, who was your idol, your inspiration? And I say Lasker, because people say my play is very similar to how Lasker used to play. On the other hand, my opening repertoire shows that I learned many openings from Botvinnik, because I had a similar repertoire, like the French and so on. And then they say that some of my combinations remind them of Alekhine. Not of Lasker. Sometimes I even say that I have surpassed Lasker in using psychology. How? Well, sometimes I use psychology with a portion of risk. That is something else, something that Lasker wouldn't allow.'

'Tal, Carlsen and Mecking! What do they have in common? Some chess knowledge, tremendous will-power and tremendous hypnotic power.'

But suppose you had to give an objective assessment. Which three players were the best three in history?
'I think it was Fischer, Kasparov and Bronstein. Bronstein had a tremendous chess impact on me. Throughout my chess career I had the feeling that Bronstein was very important for my development. Yeah, well, some people are extremely unlucky in life. And that was Bronstein, who did not have enough luck to become World Champion. I think Bronstein enriched my play. And Fischer and Kasparov, yes, they are the biggest. But they in fact used what had already been created. Bronstein was a creator, that's the difference.'

Fischer and Kasparov were standing on the shoulders of Bronstein and Keres and Botvinnik…
'I think so. They used everything that Keres, Lasker, Alekhine produced. They used everything effectively. But Bronstein was a creator.'

More than Tal?
'Tal was not a creator. No, no, Tal just played fantastic combinations. But that was nothing creative. (And he laughs, like he laughs when he says something controversial that he enjoys. You will see his ideas about Bronstein and Tal further expounded in Genna Sosonko's article in this issue – DJtG.). Let's say, in my new book I analysed the game I played against Henrique Mecking in 1974 in our match in the United States. In the introduction to the game I say that there is something unique about Henrique Mecking. It was fantastic to become a strong chess player in a country where not chess but football is the biggest sport. He won two Interzonals, unbelievable. I see Henrique Mecking in a group of three people (starts to speak solemnly, so that we grasp the importance of the moment), that is Mikhail Tal, Magnus Carlsen and Mecking! That's all. OK, what do they have in common? Because nobody else said it! This is: some chess knowledge, tremendous will-power and tremendous hypnotic power. Tremendous hypnotic power! That forces opponents just to give way (starts laughing).'

More than knowledge…
'Yes, it's much more than knowledge. Yeah, that is what I say and it has never been published, but people will read it in my book.'

The second session we have on the day that Viktor and Petra Kortchnoi are to fly back to Switzerland. In the morning I happen to talk to Peter Svidler, another citizen of St. Petersburg, on Skype. When he asks me what I am up to, I tell him I am to meet Kortchnoi after breakfast, to which Svidler reacts with the words, 'Please say hello to the Monster.'

The word brings a smile to Kortchnoi's face when I convey Svidler's greeting, but it immediately evaporates when I ask him what he thinks of such nicknames, in particular the more widespread 'Viktor the Terrible'?

'I never liked this nickname. First of all because it was introduced by a great fan of Karpov's, Dmitrije Bjelica. I dislike Dimitrije Bjelica and the nickname he gave me. Secondly, the word is very difficult to translate, this 'terrible'. Tsar Ivan the Fourth was called Ivan the Terrible. But this "terrible" is only one aspect of the Russian word, it also means "dreadful". '

Did you have other nicknames that you liked better?
'Ha! No.'

Talking about history, throughout your chess career you have met many people who were famous in other spheres…
'When I was very young, I played against a person who was born in 1889. This was grandmaster Levenfish. Later I played a boy who was born in 1990, Magnus Carlsen. So, let's say this stretches more than one hundred years. That is interesting. Well, I never played against Giri, who was born in 1994, but 1990 is also something. Levenfish I visited in his flat and he was giving me lectures on the Catalan Opening. In fact, he was the first grandmaster who in a way was my teacher or tutor. I was full of affection for this person, he was very good. I am a bit sceptical about grandmasters educated during the Soviet era, and Levenfish was educated in Tsarist times. If I listened to how he was talking, how he was presenting his views, how he played cards… Then I see that he was much higher as a human being than the guy that we consider the Patriarch of Soviet chess, Botvinnik. Without chess the Patriarch of chess was nothing special.'

But he didn't play cards, I guess.
'He not only didn't play cards, he was also culturally poor. We may say that it is dubious to play cards, but on the other hand, when people are not playing cards, what are they doing? We're talking about Botvinnik. Well, let's say, Dr. Euwe was a specialist in mathematics. Or let's say, I don't know anything about Capablanca. They say he was a diplomat. I don't believe it. I know that Alekhine studied jurisprudence, and since he was married many times he maybe badly needed to use his knowledge (laughs). We are accustomed to

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believing that chess somehow makes people more cultured or, say, that chess some time ago was the game of kings. And then the democratization of the world led to the situation that a floor sweeper, the lowest of the low, could become a very strong player. Something like when Petrosian was quite young, he would sweep the houses of his neighbours. About Botvinnik it was known that he had worked in electrotechnics. But we don't know if he really had worked there or whether this was assumed because he was World Champion. That also happened in the Soviet Union.'

But then people might say, what about yourself?
'Yeah, exactly. Then I say that I studied history in university. Then they ask me what I would be if I was not a chess player? I say I would teach children history, somewhere near Alaska. Opposite Alaska, on the other side of the sea, there was a forgotten Russian province where people were sent that had been punished. I would not be a chess player and have no chance to travel abroad, and one day, for expressing my not quite pro-Soviet views I would be sent to this place, which is called Kolema. And there in Kolema I would teach the children history. Of course I made a mistake. I should not have gone to study history, I should have studied languages. When Stalin was in power, history was very poor. Everyone had to study the history of the communist party. So I studied one course after the other and I never got my own independent views on history.'

But those you got when you defected to the West. I guess that then you tried to acquire Western culture?
'First of all, when I travelled, I was travelling with open eyes. Comparing languages and looking at features of the cultures of other countries and actually developing new independent views on everything. I never had been a prodigy, I mean, I never was a prodigy in chess and never quickly developed any views. When in the year 1965 I travelled to the Bundesrepublik Germany, they offered me to stay and to help me with the first steps to stay in Germany. And they knew who to offer it to. I didn't get angry that they suggested that I stay in the West. I delicately and diplomatically declined the offer. You had to mature politically to certain things. Then, in 1976, I was thinking, I lost 11 years of normal life. In the year 1965 I was not ready for everything. But I was slowly developing my views, and in 1976 I was ready. In fact, at the

'Without chess the Patriarch of chess was nothing special.'

end of 1974 I made up my mind and decided: I am leaving. But I could not, I had no chance to travel. But I was already talking to some members of my family, my son and my wife. I already knew Orwell's books, and Orwell had shown very clearly that whatever you are doing you should not tell anybody. My son didn't understand that I was doing it as a last resort! I was going, he didn't understand that. He never, never understood that at that time I was pressed against a wall. There was nothing else for me to do and my wife and son could not understand me! That I had to continue my chess life. I am not a historian and my life is chess and they were going to stop me playing chess, so I had to go. That was clear to me. (Without a pause) OK, you had some other questions.'

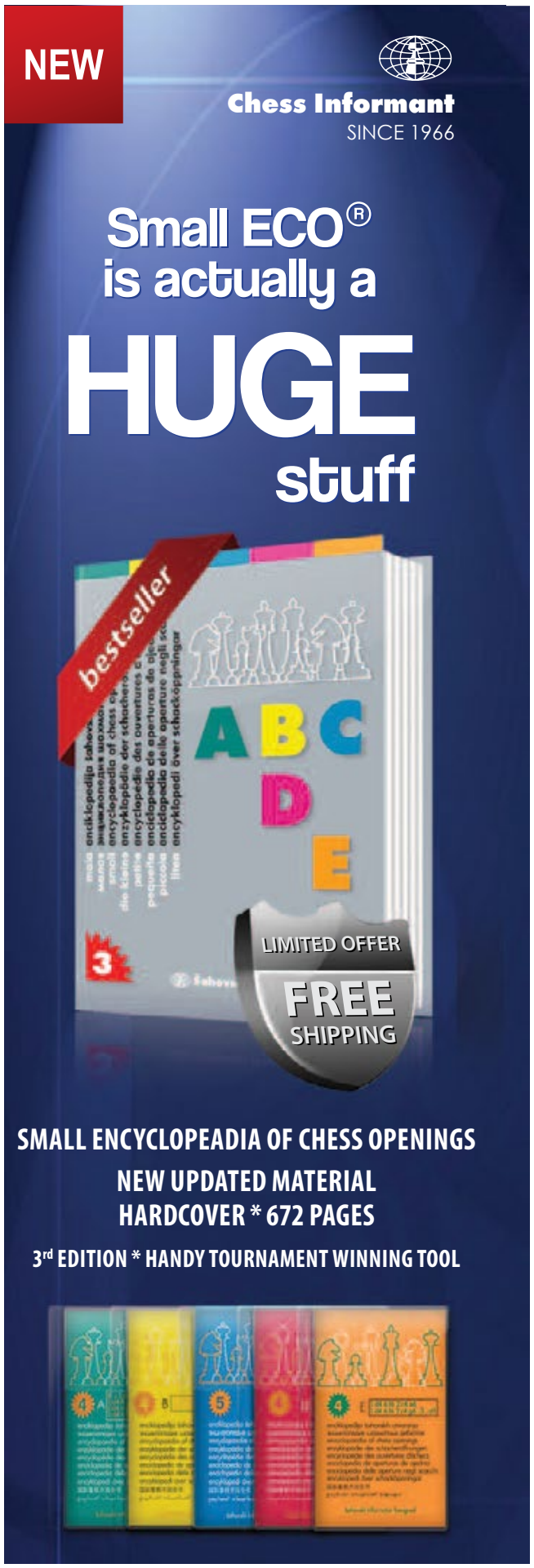
You said you were travelling with open eyes. Which were the countries that you liked best?
'I certainly liked Holland, because chess is the best organized in Holland, better than in any other European country. But that's another story. But where do I like to travel? Well, let's say, I disliked India very much. We have been to Calcutta and there were so many poor people, beggars! And they are so aggressive! You have to give them money, otherwise anything might happen. So I disliked that country, India, and I don't want to travel there. I would say in Europe, I don't know what would be the best country, but in Europe I made up my mind, the cleverest people are French. When I see the people, and I don't talk French, but when I see the people, then I think the French are the cleverest.'

But what do you mean when you say the French are the cleverest? Because of the food, because they dress well, because they have philosophers?
'Haha. It's difficult to explain, because I do not speak French.'

It's a general impression you have?
'Yeah, exactly. A general impression. By the way, it is not simple. They do not talk other languages and when you talk French they don't correct you when you make mistakes. So why should I have such a high opinion of them? That is strange, yeah.'

Maybe if you could understand them you might be very disappointed…
'Hahaha! That might be.'

Let's return to chess. One thing you have been famous for during the past decades is your critical attitude towards younger players. You are very outspoken about them when they appear on the scene.
'It's true, it's true. Yesterday I said to Giri: "You are playing very interesting chess. But it seems that you allow



your opponent to hit you in the face, like a boxer. Some boxers are fighting without any defence. You hit, I will hit. And some other people prefer to defend themselves and not allow any blow into their face. And I said, maybe you need some change in your chess repertoire?" This was very interesting for him and he immediately started telling his friends. I am looking and I am reading, and I also dislike the guy with the double French name…'

Vachier-Lagrave?
'OK, Vachier-Lagrave. He plays fantastic chess, but on the other hand he said about Giri, the only thing that Giri did in the tournament in Hoogeveen (see New In Chess 2010/8), where Giri scored 50%, the only success that Giri had was that during the tournament he beat me in table football. This was his only success! What is that? Giri is much younger than the guy, Giri had 50%...'

That's a joke.
'But some people react to these dirty jokes!'

There you go: now you have a Frenchman that you understand and he disappoints you.
'Yeah, exactly. But I believe that some people are cleverer than this guy with two names.'

But his chess is great?
'Yeah, fantastic. That is another story. I saw some games. I am unable to play this way. But on the other hand I talk sharper and more to the point, I believe (laughs), than him!'

Thinking back, when Anand appeared on the scene you said that he just played for tricks. Lately you've said that Carlsen's chess education is not that impressive. You have expressed your opinion about young players many times. Do you follow them extra-critically?
'(Thinks for some time, then replies quietly) Well, maybe in a way I am envious of them. At their age I played worse than they do. Maybe I am envious. That could be the case.'

But did you ever regret what you said to a young player? I've seen it very often after a game that you said something nasty to a player and wondered if you ever regretted your words?
'(Thinks) Ah, just a moment. I played against Caruana and it was a strange game (at the NH tournament in Amsterdam in 2008 – DJtG). At that tournament there were no increments. I lost on time and during the game I saw some expression on his face. So when I lost on time, well not everyone likes this, I said to him that he would never play chess, strong chess. One thing was that I wasn't aware how many successes he'd already had! Later I felt sorry that I said it, because what I had seen on his face was connected with his shortage of time. Yeah, I felt some regret.'

To return to these rather superficial questions, one of them is, is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
'Haha. I understand. People talk about chess and that it should be taught in school. They believe that a knowledge of chess instils a feeling of objectivity. Not all chess players have this, but in order to develop his talent a chess player has to be objective.'

Has it helped you? Do you think you can see things in everyday life more objectively thanks to the fact that you play chess?
'That is exactly what I am saying. Ideally this should be the case (laughs).'

You tell me that you forget things. Yesterday your wife said that if possible you would forget your head. Is that because of age or because of being a chess player and thinking about other things?
'No, because of age. On the other hand, some things I never forget, because they are a feature of my professional life. Digits, figures I remember very well. I only have to see a telephone number, all digits, to know it. That's a feature of my chess life. And other

things, whether I like it or not, I forget, presumably because they are not a feature of chess life.'

They asked you what present you wanted for your 80th birthday and you said, I would like to play in a chess tournament.
'Yeah. There is an organizer, Isler, who is Swiss, and he believes he is the organizer of all the festivities for me. He asked me where would you like to play? And I said, it is all the same, Moscow, Paris, New York, whatever. Presumably because he has connections with Spanish people he managed to find a tournament in San Sebastian.'

Do you have any idea till what age you want to play tournament chess?
'Let me tell you something. It happened about almost 20 years ago. I beat John van der Wiel and he annotated this game and he said, I lost about 10 games to Kortchnoi and I don't know why. I rate him as a nice guy, there is nothing special. Why do I lose to him? Viktor please, keep on playing till you are 80 years old.'

So he could finally beat you.
'Yes, so he could beat me.'

But now you still have 100 rating points more than he has.
'Hahahaha. Yes, he is getting older and also losing some rating points.'

So how long should he wait?
'Exactly. The game he lost and annotated was I think in the year 1991. But something awful happened. If this continues then it is impossible to continue playing chess. Two times I just fell asleep during a game. It happened in a competition against girls, at the end of 2009 in Marianske Lazne. Against Muzychuk and against Koneru. With Muzychuk it was a dead drawn position and somehow I got so peaceful and started thinking for about 20 minutes and lost on time around move 28.'

You did not literally fall asleep?
'That is difficult to say. When you talk to Petra, she says that I can fall asleep with my eyes open. Difficult to say. That happened once and the second time I lost on time on move 38. I was thinking for seven minutes and again, whether it was difficult to find a solution or whether my mind got peaceful, I lost on time for the second time. I was very angry, as it was obvious that I was not thinking at that point. She should have offered me a draw, Koneru, the Indian girl.'

But in fact you were angry with nature.
'Yes, with nature, my nature, exactly. That happened and it is impossible to endure. If it continues I have to stop playing chess.'

And then what would you do?
'(Immediately) Then for some time I would invite pupils. Pupils have come to me from Switzerland, from other countries, the United States, from France. Unfortunately some pupils stopped playing chess. Three people, not one! One is Jeroen Piket, and the second one is Lautier, also a very strong guy. And the third one is from Israel, Har-Zvi. So, three people who visited my home, who analysed with me for hours and hours, they stopped playing! Maybe I enriched their views about life in general, I don't know.'

Or, maybe, to return to our talk of yesterday, this is your place in some divine plan? For them.
'(Thinks for a while) For them? Yeah, maybe yeah. Something like Lautier expressed in a newspaper, that he is not able ever to play so well, so interestingly as me. So he stopped.'

Do you like this, to be an inspiring force for other people?
'Well, I like it, but not if they stop playing chess.'

You will only stop playing chess if nature forces you to do so?
'Yes, that's what it looks like. If nature forces me, I will have to stop playing chess. I agree.' ■

BAS BEEKHUIZEN

Wijk aan Zee 1992. Viktor Kortchnoi and Jeroen Piket analyse their game, watched by a very young Peter Leko and Vladimir Tukmakov.

30 signed copies of *My Best Games* by Viktor Kortchnoi are available at: www.newinchess.com

Trainer Turns

The circus was in town. No, that's not a euphemism. An actual circus – as in lions and tigers and clowns – was playing in Aix-les-Bains up until the last day of the European Championship. Not a bad diversion for some players following a rough game in the eleven round slog. Last year's champion Ian Nepomniachtchi was succeeded by his trainer Vladimir Potkin who burst away with 5 out of 5 and remained in the lead till the very last round. **Macauley Peterson** reports on a championship that stirred up heated discussions about anti-cheating measures and fair tiebreaks.

While camels and jugglers may provide welcome distraction, there was a real risk that the Championship would devolve into a circus of another sort, one preoccupied with cheating allegations, and wracked by suspicions of illegal collusion, bordering on paranoia. In a story that we have yet to hear the end of, the up-and-coming French star Sebastian Feller was suspended for using computer assistance at the Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad by the Disciplinary Committee of the French Chess Federation in a hearing on March 19th. However, since he is actively appealing the decision, he was allowed to play in the European Championship anyway, causing much consternation.

Fortunately, the field of 172 Grandmasters did not fail to produce a worthy quartet of winners, lead by Vladimir Potkin, who in fact never relinquished a share of first place after jumping out to a perfect 5/5 at the start.

The scarlet-haired Russian was joined on the impressive score of 8½ out of 11 by Grandmasters Radoslaw Wojtaszek of Poland, Judit Polgar of Hungary, and Alexander Moiseenko from Ukraine. The top three finishers all drew their final round games in regrettably but understandably short order, providing little drama at the top. Meanwhile, Moiseenko had to fight with Luke McShane of England for his share of first, and only narrowly missed a spot on the podium with one of the sleek glass trophies, on the basis of a controversial tiebreak.

The tiebreak system, in fact, may prove to be the greater story than the

Champion

The 2011 European Champion: 28-year-old Russian grandmaster Vladimir Potkin.

MACAULEY PETERSON

cheating allegations surrounding Feller, who finished in 7th place, just a half point behind the winners.

Prior European Championships featured tiebreak playoff matches to determine the qualifiers for the World Championship cycle – in recent years, the World Cup knockout tournament, which remains a precursor to many a Grandmaster's World Championship aspirations.

This year, however, the playoff day was discarded in favor of a tiebreak based on 'performance rating' with the following caveat: 'The highest and the lowest rated opponent will be deleted and the maximum rating difference of two players shall be 400 points.'

For many players, including Peter Heine Nielsen from Denmark, this implied that you drop the highest and lowest rated opponent for the calculation of the average rating, but that the scoring percentage remains unchanged. 'When you drop them also for the calculation of the percentage score, it suddenly goes completely wrong,' Nielsen says.

To understand what 'performance rating' generally means, take the following example. Two players with the same rating play against the same opponents and score the same number of points. They should therefore have the same performance rating. In the system used in Aix-les-Bains, they don't necessarily. Instead, if one player scored a point against his highest rated opponent, that result would be dropped from the scoring percentage and the 'performance rating' would suffer. If the second player instead *lost* to the same opponent, and scored a point against a lower rated opponent, his or her performance rating would be calculated as higher. Such a result is tragicomically absurd.

For Nielsen, there were serious consequences of this tiebreak regulation. In the last round against Ivan Saric (rated 2626) Nielsen made a draw, but that wasn't enough for him to finish among the World Cup qualifiers. It turns out that if Saric had instead had a rating of 2385 (the rating of Nielsen's weakest opponent) or below, Nielsen *would* have qualified. While the regulation as stated above appears on the tournament website and in the European Chess Union rules and regulations, Nielsen only learned of the interpretation and its consequences for his World Cup

EUROPE ECHECS

Who wouldn't be proud of such a trainer? 2010 European Champion Ian Nepomniachtchi happily poses for a picture with his successor Vladimir Potkin.

qualification minutes before the closing ceremony. In another illustration he points out that if Radoslaw Wojtaszek's first two rounds opponents swapped rating – and they differed by only two Elo points – Wojtaszek would have been the European champion ahead of Potkin. As a tiebreaker, this is not very logical.

The bottom line: 'The system they are using – the way they implemented it – is not performance rating,' Nielsen argues, and he is not alone in this assessment.

Grandmaster Pavel Tregubov, who handles high-level chess and international relations for the French Federation, and was also playing in Aix-les-Bains, calls the application of the ECU regulation 'simply ridiculous' and 'an incredible error.' He calls for the rule to be changed or clarified immediately by the ECU.

Twenty-three qualification spots to this year's World Cup were up for grabs. All the players with 8 or 8½ points qualified, but Vladimir Potkin, Peter Svidler and Rauf Mamedov were already through based on their 2010 European Championship result and/or rating, so their spots went to the 24th-26th place finishers. In all, just ten of the twenty-eight players who finished with 7½ made the cut.

The performance of the top four finishers was decidedly *un*controversial. Vladimir Potkin dominated the early rounds, then sustained his +5 score, adding one more in a key win with black in Round 10 over the always-dangerous Georgian Baadur Jobava.

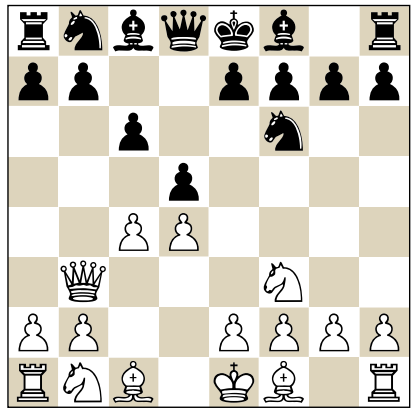
Potkin expected the game to be decisive, since Jobava, aside from being an aggressive and risky player, had himself already qualified for the World Cup by finishing second in the 2010 Championship.

NOTES BY
Vladimir Potkin

SL 1.4 – D11
Baadur Jobava
Vladimir Potkin
Aix-les-Bains 2011 (10)

After an explosive start there followed a series of draws, but I was especially disappointed with the last one, where I was unable to initiate even a semblance of a fight. Therefore, when I was paired in the penultimate round with the simultaneously strong and aggressive opponent Baadur Jobava, I was pleased. Realizing that Baadur would be fighting only for one of the medals, I expected an uncompromising battle and an interesting game – just what I needed at that moment.

1.c4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♕b3



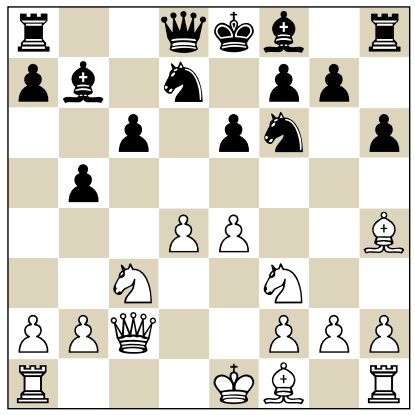
4...e6

In recent times I have answered the modest queen move with 4...dxc4 5.♕xc4 ♗g4, but since my opponent's choice of this line was not accidental, I decided to change course.

5.♗g5 h6 6.♗h4 dxc4 7.♕xc4 b5 8.♕c2 ♗b7 9.♘c3

I suspect that White chose his piece set-up at the board. 9.e3 is usually preferred.

9...♘bd7 10.e4

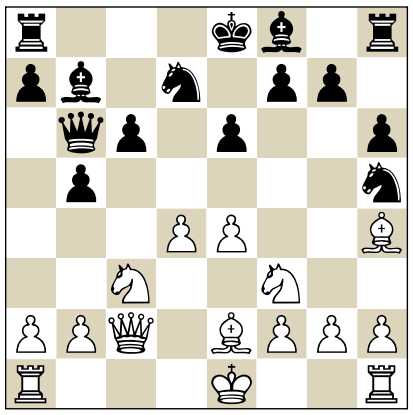


10...♕b6

At that moment I was absolutely sure that I knew the correct plan, but in this position it proved to be too audacious. 10...b4 11.♘a4 ♕a5 is more in the spirit of the position, but the immediate 10...♕a5 appeals to me even more.

11.♗e2 ♘h5

After making this amusing move quite quickly, I felt very happy, but White's reply came as an unpleasant surprise. But if you don't take any risks, you don't get to drink champagne!



12.d5

I was expecting 12.0-0, when after 12...g5 13.♗g3 g4 14.♘e5 ♘xg3 15.hxg3 ♘xe5 16.dxe5 h5 17.a4 ♗g7 Black achieves a comfortable game.

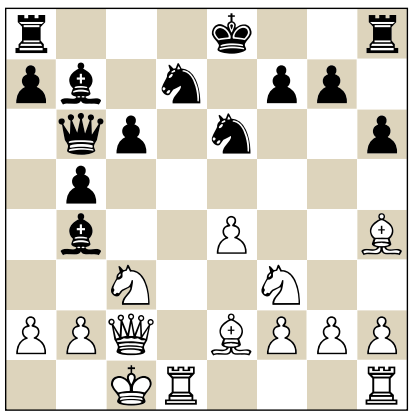
12...♘f4 I did not want to have to retreat after the impulsive 12...g5 13.dxe6 fxe6 14.♘e5.

13.dxe6 White made this move quite quickly, but during the game I was more afraid of 13.0-0, after which Black would have had to make positional concessions in order to complete his development.

13...♘xe6 14.0-0-0

True to his aggressive style, Baadur chooses the crudest path, letting it be known that more modest development does not come into his plans.

14...♗b4



15.♔b1

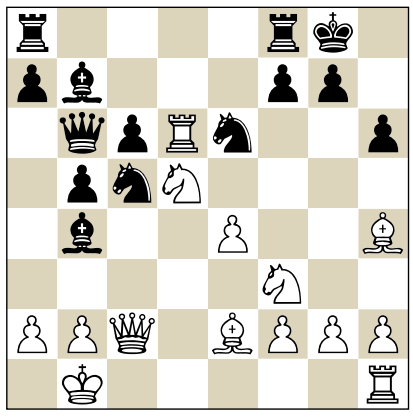
We were both convinced that the direct 15.♖xd7 ♔xd7 16.♘e5+ ♔e8 17.♗h5 g6 18.♘xg6 did not work because of 18...♕c5, but we overlooked the cool reply 19.e5. Meanwhile, this move changes the picture significantly, and it becomes obvious that White succeeds in creating threats to the king caught in the centre.

15...♘dc5 16.♖d6

White creates a threat, but it obviously did not come into his plans that the opponent could simply ignore it.

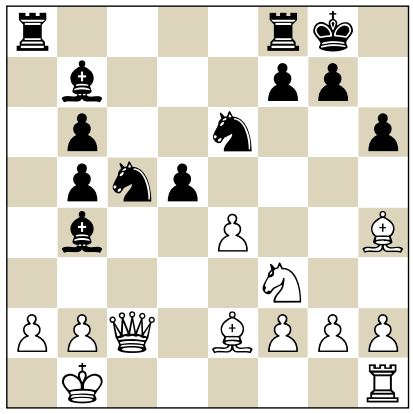
16...0-0 It was not yet too late to move the other knight.

17.♘d5



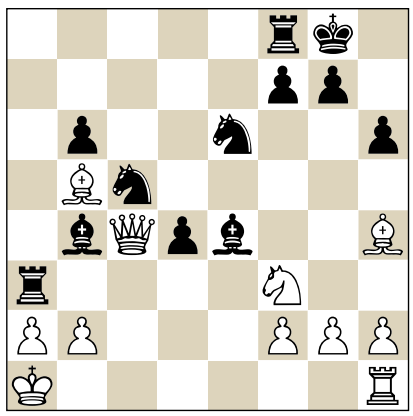
17...cxd5 18.♖xb6 axb6

After the queen sacrifice Black swiftly creates threats ahead of his opponent. White's chief misfortune is that his dark-squared bishop is firing into empty space.



19.a3

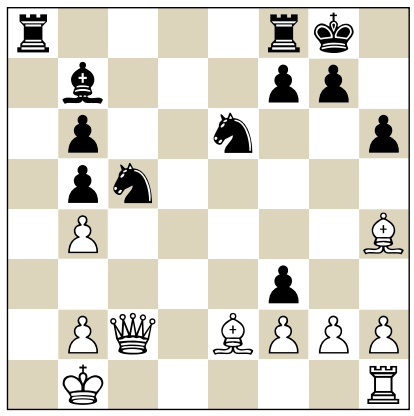
After 19.♗xb5 d4 20.♕c4 ♗xe4+ 21.♔a1 Black has a strong continuation of the attack in the form of 21...♖a3



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

when White has to look for a way to save the game in the ending arising after 22.♕xb4 ♘b3+ 23.♕xb3 ♖xb3 24.axb3 ♖a8+ 25.♗a4 b5 26.♔a2 bxa4 27.b4 – apparently that is what he should have played. The dangers of White's position are also demonstrated by the variation 19.♘e5 ♖xa2 20.♔xa2 ♘d4 21.♕d1 ♖a8+ 22.♔b1 ♘cb3, when Black wins.

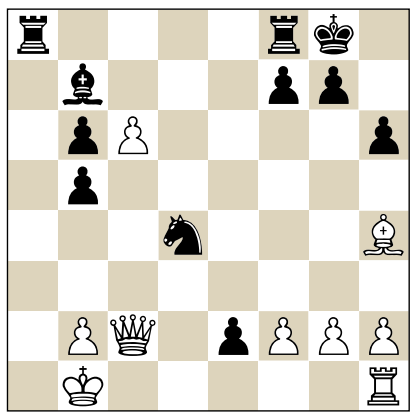
19...dxe4 20.axb4 exf3



21.bxc5

It does not help to play 21.♗xf3 ♗xf3 22.bxc5 (22.gxf3 ♘d4) 22...♗h5, when the bishop switches to the deadly diagonal.

21...fxe2 22.c6 ♘d4

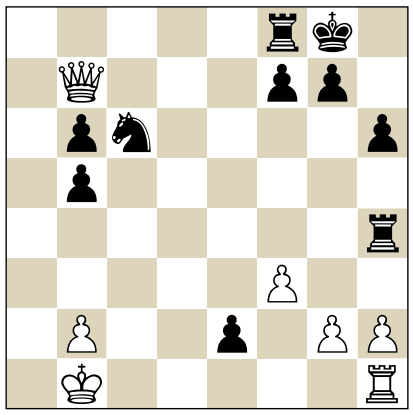


23.♕d3

After 23.cxb7 Black has the knockout blow 23...♖a1+, and despite the resource 24.♔xa1 ♘xc2+ 25.♔b1 e1♕+ 26.♖xe1 ♘xe1 27.♗g3 he should win the endgame without any particular problems, since after 27...♘xg2 28.♔c2 f5 29.b8♕ ♖xb8 30.♗xb8 ♔f7 he is the first to occupy the important central square.

23...♘xc6 24.f3

If 24.♕xe2, then 24...♖a4 is again decisive.
24...♖a4 25.♕d7 ♖xh4 26.♕xb7



26...♖d4
But not 26...♖d8 27.♕xc6 ♖d1+ 28.♔a2 ♖xh1 29.♕c8+ with perpetual check.
Now White resigned.

I can't help mentioning the sincere and gentlemanly way that Baadur congratulated me on my win after the game. It is not everyone who is able to retain their composure after a defeat in such an important game. This win regained me one of the leading positions and made me the clear favourite in the leading trio before the last round, thanks to my better rating performance. I should like to thank all those close to me, who supported me throughout the tournament, and I was very pleased to receive numerous congratulations from all around the world. With such a notable victory came the realization that there are celebrations that are even rather more significant than a birthday!

■ ■ ■

Remarkably, Judit Polgar and Radoslaw Wojtaszek also won in the penultimate round, moving them to a three-way tie, with 8/10. In the final round Potkin faced Polgar, who played solidly, opting for the Nimzo rather than a sharp King's Indian. Considering her strong form throughout the event, Potkin decided to offer a draw on move 12, less than twenty minutes into the game, rather than risk a stab at clear first.

'Of course I wanted to show the spectators some good fighting game, but I already had had big pressure during all the tournament, and I think they can forgive me for this', he explained.

Potkin is better known for his work as a second of Levon Aronian, and more recently last year's European Champion Ian Nepomniachtchi (who finished in just 48th place this time around). He scored in the middle of the super-strong Russian Championship field last December, which was won by Nepomniachtchi, an event Potkin called 'a good exam' that helped prepare him for this victory in Aix-les-Bains.

Potkin's qualification to the World Cup in 2010 took a lot of the pressure off him relative to most of his rivals, which he says made it much easier to play in Aix-les-Bains. The added desire for many of the competitors to qualify is what makes the European Championship one of the toughest open tournaments in the world. Even with +4 or +5 scores, players cannot rest on their laurels, since they never know if their competitors will win even more. Each round Potkin faced tough competition from the likes of Wojtaszek, Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu, and Andrey Volokitin.

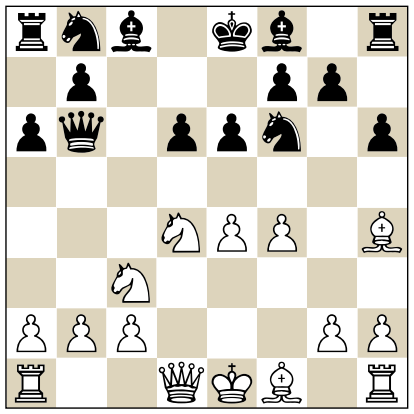
After seeing Polgar-Potkin end in a short draw, Wojtaszek had the possibility to press for a win with white in Round 11 to go for sole first, but facing the solid number one seed Peter Svidler he decided not to take any chances, and a draw was agreed after Svidler's offer on move 20 in an even position.

Wojtaszek had never played in a World Cup before, and was pleased to shake off his disappointing results earlier in the year at the Tata Steel B-tournament and the Polish Championship. One of his key wins he scored in a sharp theoretical duel with Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu.

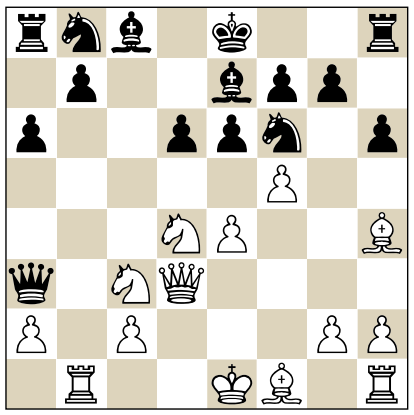
NOTES BY
Radoslaw Wojtaszek

SI 4.8 – B96
Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu
Radoslaw Wojtaszek
Aix-les-Bains 2011 (9)

Before this round I was on '+4', so I was in a fighting mood in order to catch the leaders.
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗g5
This came as a surprise to me, because Liviu has never played this line before.
6...e6 7.f4 h6 8.♗h4 ♕b6



The Poisoned Pawn connected with ... h6-♗h4 is becoming quite trendy nowadays. I had prepared this line before the European Championship with GM Gajewski, and it brought me two nice victories.
9.♕d2
The Moldovian IM Vedmediuc played 9.♕d3 against me in Round 2, but he was in big trouble after 9...♕xb2 10.♖b1 ♕a3 11.f5 ♗e7

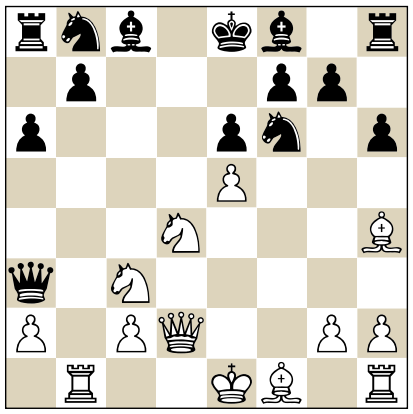


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

12.♗e2? (he definitely should have played 12.fxe6 fxe6 13.♗e2 because now the inclusion of ...h6-♗h4 favours Black) 12...♘xe4!, and I eventually won that game quite easily.

9...♕xb2 10.♖b1 ♕a3 11.e5 dxe5 12.fxe5

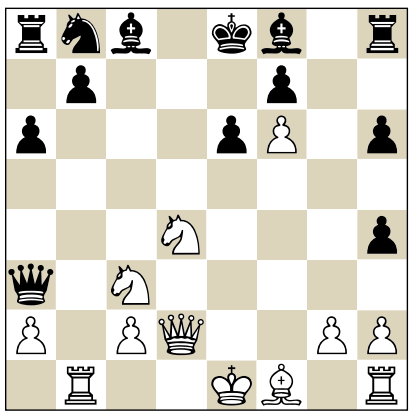
So now we're back in the classical Poisoned Pawn again.



12...g5

Here the old main line is 12...♘fd7. Emil Sutovsky won a nice game against Alexander Motylev (see New In Chess 2010/7 – ed.) with the line starting with 12...♘d5, but during the game I decided that repeating this would be a bit naive, as I was sure that my opponent would be well prepared for it.

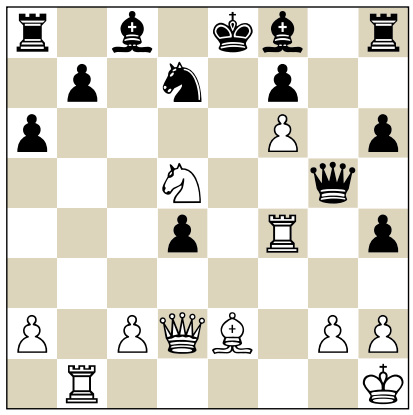
13.exf6 gxh4



14.♗e2

Also possible is 14.♘e4, preventing the ...♕a5-g5 manoeuvre. On the other hand, White has to sacrifice one more pawn, and after 14...♕xa2 15.♖d1 ♕d5 16.♕e3 the position is unclear.

14...♕a5 15.0-0 ♘d7 16.♔h1 ♕g5 17.♖f4 e5 18.♘d5 exd4



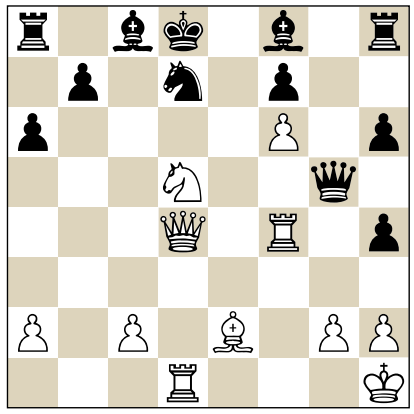
19.♕xd4!?

So far we had followed a recent game Bromberger-Areschenko, and only this natural move is a novelty. It didn't come as a big surprise to me, as it was my main move when I analysed this position. The only problem was that I hadn't checked my analysis before this game, so I spent about 50 minutes for the next few moves trying to figure out how I should react.

In the aforementioned game, 19.♘c7+ was played, but Black was more than fine after 19...♔d8 20.♘xa8 ♗d6.

19...♔d8! 20.♖d1

20.♘e7 is not too dangerous for Black, as concrete analysis will show: 20...♕c5! 21.♘xc8 ♖xc8 22.♖d1 ♗d6! 23.♕xd6 ♕xd6 24.♖xd6 ♖xc2 25.♗d1 ♖e8! 26.h3 ♖c6.

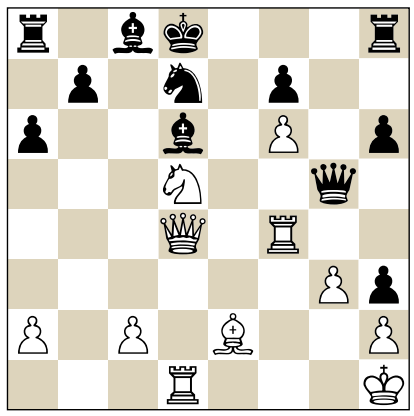


20...h3!

This is a very important move for Black's counterplay.

I don't think Black will survive after 20...♗c5 21.♕d3! ♗d6 22.♖d4.

21.g3 ♗d6



22.♖e4

My opponent spent a lot of time on

EUROPE ECHECS

Second and first prize winners Radoslaw Wojtaszek and Vladimir Potkin drew their game in Round 8 in 38 moves.

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Dejan Bojkov: A modern way to play the King's Indian

The Zürich Interzonal of 1953 and the marvellous annotations of David Bronstein changed our understanding of the KID. From a second-class opening, it became one of the most aggressive and dangerous setups for the second player. Back in those days players tended to develop their queen's knight to d7. Later a more central approach came into fashion and the knight found a good square on c6. Current practice though, has revealed that there is one more good square for that piece - the a6 one. From this new outpost the knight is heading for the centre without obstructing its own bishop.
Bulgarian GM Dejan Bojkov is one of the true supporters of such a development. In this DVD you will find a repertoire based on flexible development whenever possible, and an explanation of some strategic nuances of the KID. The author shares with you a lot of novelties that he had prepared throughout his study of the lines.
Video running time: 5 hours.

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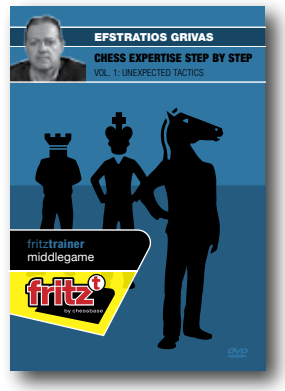
Efstratios Grivas: Chess Expertise STEP BY STEP Vol. 1: Unexpected Tactics



Tactics in chess are sequences of moves which limit the opponent's options and may result in a tangible gain by force. They are usually contrasted with strategy, in which advantages take longer to be realized and where the opponent is less constrained in his choice of reply.
Tactics are an essential part of chess, since even purely positional games may contain certain moments where one cannot do without sharp calculations. The fundamental building blocks of tactics are forks, skewers, batteries, discovered attacks, undermining, overloading, deflection, pins and interference. This DVD covers important sections of this field and helps to understand in depth the proper handling of (unexpected) tactics in certain cases. We will examine how to achieve (or to avoid) mate on the back rank, the strength of the 'dancing' knights, how to sac the queen near the opposing king, how to march with the king, how to use efficiently the f4-break and finally how to make sacrifices to gain the initiative.
As Nigel Short once said, 'Modern chess is too much concerned with things like pawn structure. Forget it - checkmate ends the game!'. Efstratios Grivas is a Grandmaster and highly experienced chess trainer and chess author. He lives in Athens, and he is also a FIDE Senior Trainer (Secretary of the FIDE Trainers' Commission).

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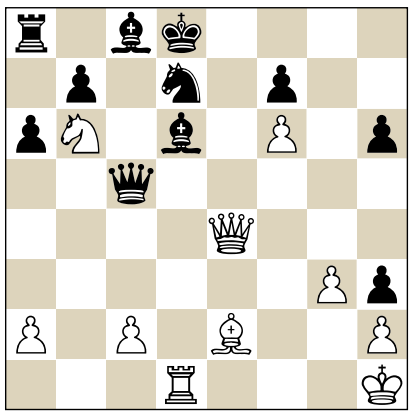
this move. White had some alternatives, but I don't think any of them offer an edge if Black plays accurately.
After 22.♗g4 ♗xf4 23.♗xd7 ♗xd7 24.♕b6+ (24.♘b6 ♔c7! 25.♘xd7 ♕b5, and the engines actually think that Black is better, but don't ask me to explain why!) 24...♔e8 25.♕b4 ♔d8 White has nothing better than a repetition.
And 22.♘b6 is met by 22...♗c5! 23.♕b2 ♔c7! 24.♘xd7 ♖d8 25.♘xc5 ♖xd1+ 26.♗xd1 ♕xc5, and after a series of strong moves Black has a good game.

22...♖e8 23.♘b6

After 23.♖xe8+ ♔xe8 24.♘b6 ♗c5! 25.♕e4+ ♔f8 26.♘xa8 ♘xf6 Black has great compensation for the exchange.

23...♖xe4 24.♕xe4 ♕c5



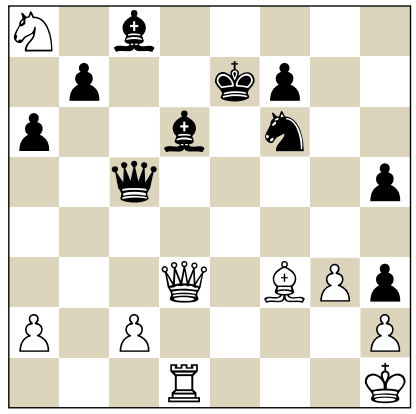
25.♘xa8

During the game I was a bit afraid of 25.♘c4, as I hadn't seen a clear refutation, but Black has 25...♗c7! (I calculated 25...♗f8, which leads to a draw after 26.♘e5 ♔c7 27.♘xd7 ♗xd7 28.♖xd7+ ♔xd7 29.♕xb7+ ♔e6 30.♕xa8 ♕xc2) 26.♖d5 ♕f8 27.♗g4 a5!, and this cold-blooded defence gives Black an edge.

25...♘xf6 26.♕d3?!

We had already reached mutual time-trouble and I was happy with my position, because it is much easier to play in practice.
Stronger for White was 26.♕c4!, when I should probably play 26...♔e7 27.♘b6 ♕xb6 28.♕xc8 ♘e4 29.♖f1 ♘f2+ 30.♔g1 ♘g4+ 31.♔h1 ♘f2+, with a draw.

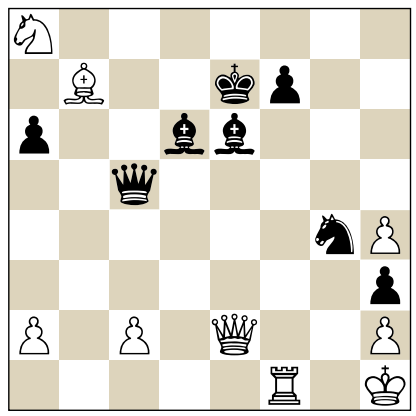
26...♔e7 27.♗f3 h5



28.♕e2+?

White should still have tried to exchange queens with 28.♕d4! ♕xd4 29.♖xd4 ♗c5 30.♖c4! ♔d6 31.♖f4!, when he should hold, for instance 31...♘g4 32.♖xf7 ♘f2+ 33.♔g1 ♗e6 34.♖g7! (34.♖xb7?? would lose to 34...♘e4+ 35.♔h1 ♗d5) 34...♘g4+, because Black has nothing better than perpetual check.

28...♗e6 29.♗xb7 ♘g4 30.♖f1 h4! 31.gxh4



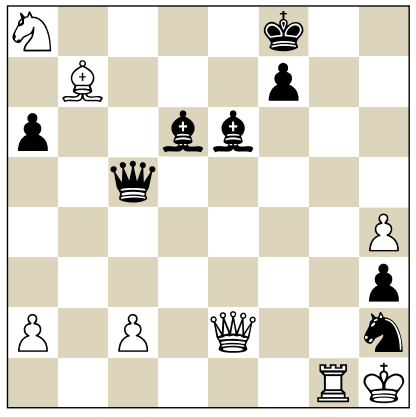
31...♘xh2?

After the game I was a bit surprised to find out that this natural move could have spoiled my advantage.
The engines very quickly told me that 31...♗e5! was winning, and only then ♘xh2, because now there is no pin on the e-file and the knight can jump back to g4.

32.♖g1?

Returning the favour. White had a last chance to hold with the unexpected 32.♖e1! ♔f8, and now 33.♕e3 ♕b4 34.♕h6+ ♔e7 35.♖xe6+! fxe6 36.♕g7+ ♔d8 37.♕g8+ leads to a perpetual.

32...♔f8!



Now Black is winning again and this time I was able to finish the game with some accurate moves.

33.♖g5 ♕b4 34.♕e4 ♕b1+ 35.♖g1 ♘f1! 36.♕c6 ♘g3+ 37.♔h2 ♘f1+ 38.♔h1 ♕d1! 39.♕f3 ♕d2

White resigned.

■ ■ ■

Polgar took the bronze, in her first bid for the European title since the 2001 championship in Ohrid, Macedonia. For her the World Cup qualification was also the most important factor, as she notes it has become increasingly difficult to find events to play in these days, since her rating has slumped in recent years. Polgar was quite frank in her assessment of the situation elite tournament organizers face in selecting which players to invite. 'If you drop your rating, you're the past. I just live in the reality, I know how it is.'

Polgar played 'freely' as she put it, drawing only two other games, and winning seven to make up for a blunder against one of the big surprises of the tournament, the Austrian GM Markus Ragger, who finished in 6th place and was the lowest rated among the top 18. Polgar laughed that it was a shame 'most wins' was not the first tiebreak criteria, although Moiseenko ended up sharing that honor after winning his last three, to catch the leaders.

The following game was her most spectacular win and one of the absolute highlights if not *the* highlight of the European Championship.

Aix-les-Bains

NOTES BY
Judit Polgar

EO 64.7 – A13
Levan Pantsulaia
Judit Polgar
Aix-les-Bains 2011 (7)

It is 10 years ago, in Ohrid, Macedonia, that I last played in the European Championship. On that occasion I tied for 3rd, but the play-off went against me, so I did not get a medal. I was looking forward to playing in Aix-les-Bains in the 12th European Championship. I had not been playing in a classical chess event since the Olympiad, so I was hungry to play and challenge myself to see what I would be able to show in such a tense event with close to 400 participants. Obviously, the main reason why most of the strong players participate is to qualify for the World Cup, which will be held in Khanty-Mansiysk next August. There were a few players that had already qualified from the previous European Championship, and they were competing to get a medal. It was clear from the first moment that to qualify one had to make at least plus 4, but that for a sure spot plus 5 was needed. After Round 5 I was quite happy with my three wins and two draws. In Round 6 I got a bad opening and sacrificed a knight to complicate things, but it backfired. In Round 7 I played with black against the young Georgian talent Pantsulaia.

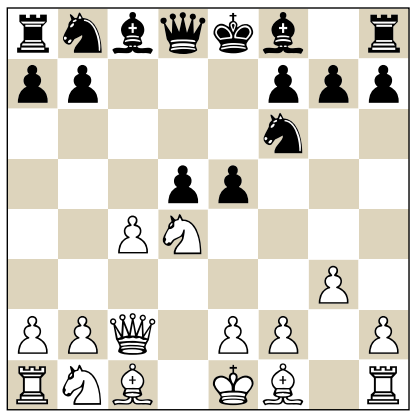
1.c4 e6 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.g3 d5 4.♕c2

I had the feeling that my opponent's main idea was to surprise me in the opening. This is a premature move for the queen.

4...c5 5.d4 cxd4 6.♘xd4

I realized quickly that after my next move there is only one difference between this position and the game I played against Gelfand in Wijk aan Zee in 2008, which I won in memorable style. In that game the bishop was on g2 instead of the badly placed queen.

6...e5



7.♘b3

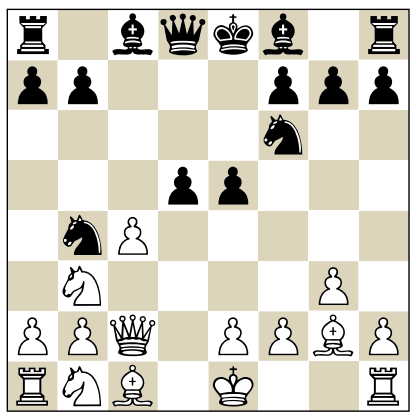
After the game I found one other game with this position, in which White continued with 7.♘f3. After that move my plan was to continue 7...d4 (7...♘c6, as in the game between Takacs and Alekhine at the famous tournament in Kecskemet in 1927, is also very tempting for Black: 8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.a3 ♗e6 10.♗d2 ♗e7 11.♘c3 0-0, with a better game for Black, who went on to win after 12.♗g2 ♖c8 13.♖d1 ♘d4 14.♕b1 ♗f6 15.0-0 ♘xc3 16.bxc3 ♘xe2+ 17.♔h1 ♕c7 18.♕d3 ♘xc3 19.♖c1 e4) 8.♘xe5 ♕a5+.

7...♘c6

Here I realized that I was already better, which to tell you the truth I could not even have dreamed of after move 7!

8.♗g2 Obviously it is very difficult to make a choice with white when your position is already worse at a such an early stage.

8...♘b4

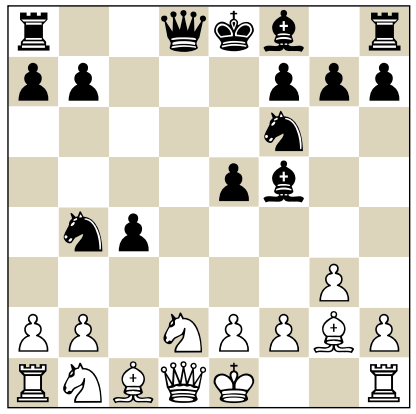


This was the right move to highlight the drawback of the early queen move on move 4.

9.♕d1 dxc4

I did not really see the difference between the immediate 9...dxc4 and then 10...♗f5 or the other way around during the game. As usual, one is more precise than the other. Here the bishop move was more forcing: 9...♗f5 10.♘a3, and now 10...dxc4 11.♘d2 transposes to the game.

10.♘3d2 ♗f5

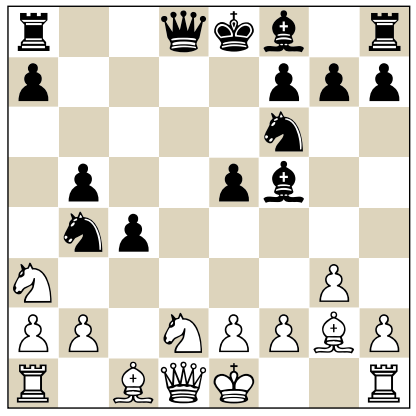


11.♘a3

Yes, this is the logical move, but White had a chance to escape from his very bad position by sacrificing the rook! I was simply not paying enough attention to the fact that White could sac material for the initiative with 11.0-0!, and now 11...♘c2 is not the best because of the move I usually play on move 1 with white: 12.e4!, and suddenly White's bad, passive position of a few moves ago is gone and White is turning the tide: 12...♘xa1 13.exf5, and Black will not be able to get the knight out of the corner. Therefore, Black should react to 11.0-0 with 11...♕c7 or 11...♖b8, with a nice game for Black.

11...b5!

This move sprang to my mind immediately and I loved it, so I did not hesitate too much and played it.



Judit Polgar: 'It is interesting to notice that this was the only time in the game that one of my pieces moved backwards!'

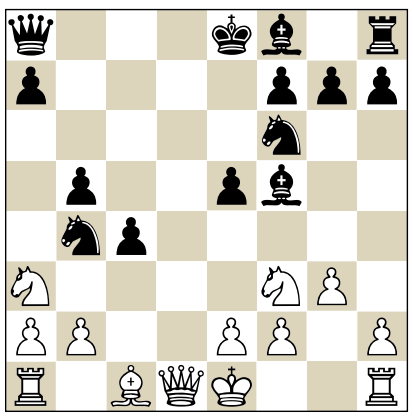
NEW IN CHESS

12.♗xa8

White kind of has to take the rook, as after 12.0-0 I just defend the b5 pawn with 12...♖b8, when besides being a pawn up I also have the initiative.

12...♕xa8 13.♘f3

The logical continuation. After 13.0-0 ♗h3 Black has a huge advantage.



13...♘d3+!

It is hard to judge this move. I could also simply have played 13...♕c6 or 13...a6, with a large advantage. On the other hand I saw that with this idea I can stop White from castling, and it is also almost a mating attack. It looked so good and so tempting that I could not stop myself from trying it out.

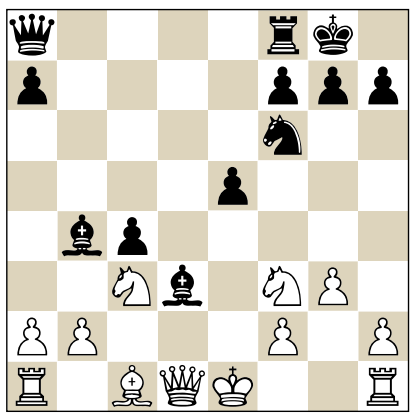
But Black obviously also has a great position after 13...♕c6! 14.0-0 ♗h3 15.♖e1 ♘g4. And 13...a6 was the suggestion of Garry (Kasparov) after the game when we met him in the park.

14.exd3 ♗xd3

This was my idea, so I did not spend too much time on 14...♗g4, which was also interesting.

15.♘xb5 The only move to bring the a3 knight to c3 to help in the defence.

15...♗b4+ 16.♘c3 0-0



This is the position I had in mind when I sacrificed my knight. All my pieces are playing, only the rook is missing, but not for long. White is a rook up against only one little pawn, but what an initiative for Black!

16...♕e4+ was too early because of 17.♗e3, and I would only help him develop for no reason.

17.♖g1 Again the only continuation for White to get out of the pin.

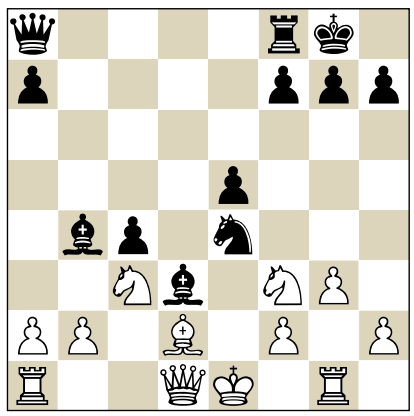
17.♗e3 would be practically losing on the spot because of 17...♗e4 followed, for example, by 18.0-0 ♗xf3 19.♕d2 ♕c8 and ...♕h3, with mate on the next move.

And 17.♗d2 runs into 17...♗xc3 18.bxc3 ♕e4+ 19.♗e3 ♘d5.

17...♘e4

17...♕e4+ was still not good because of 18.♗e3 ♘d5, and now it becomes clear why 17.♖g1 was important: 19.♘d2, and White saves himself.

18.♗d2



18...♖d8

It is very difficult for White to get out of his tight position. The text-move was a logical one, but there was another option.

Here I saw the following line: 18...♘xc3 19.♗xc3 ♗xc3+ 20.bxc3 ♕e4+ 21.♔d2 ♕b7 22.♔e1 (or 22.♔c1 ♖b8 23.♕d2 ♕b1+ 24.♖xb1 ♖xb1 mate) 22...♕e4+, with only a draw. So I decided to continue and bring my last piece into play: my rook!

19.♖c1

White's plan is to play ♗e3 next, and if he had time for ♘d2 afterwards, I would be in big trouble. But it was my turn.

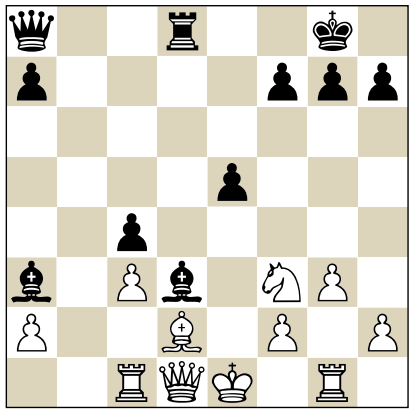
After 19.♘g5 my intention was to play 19...♘xd2 20.♕xd2 and 20...h6 21.♘h3 ♗xc3 22.bxc3 ♗e4 23.♕e3 ♗f3 24.♔f1 ♗g4. I had seen it until this point and I was happy!

Aix-les-Bains 2011

1	Vladimir Potkin	RUS	2653	8½
2	Radoslaw Wojtaszek	POL	2711	8½
3	Judit Polgar	HUN	2686	8½
4	Alexander Moiseenko	UKR	2673	8½
5	Paco Vallejo	ESP	2707	8
6	Markus Ragger	AUT	2614	8
7	Sebastien Feller	FRA	2657	8
8	Peter Svidler	RUS	2730	8
9	Rauf Mamedov	AZE	2667	8
10	Nikita Vitiugov	RUS	2720	8
11	Sergei Zhigalko	BLR	2680	8
12	Dmitry Yakovenko	RUS	2718	8
13	Anton Korobov	UKR	2647	8
14	Ernesto Inarkiev	RUS	2674	8
15	Evgeny Postny	ISR	2585	8
16	Sergei Azarov	BLR	2615	7½
17	Ildar Khairullin	RUS	2634	7½
18	Mikhail Kobalia	RUS	2672	7½
19	Namig Guliyev	AZE	2522	7½
20	Yaroslav Zherebukh	UKR	2560	7½
21	Alexander Riazantsev	RUS	2679	7½
22	Viorel Iordachescu	MDA	2626	7½
23	Constantin Lupulescu	ROU	2626	7½
24	Luke McShane	ENG	2683	7½
25	Daniel Fridman	GER	2661	7½
26	Alexander Motylev	RUS	2677	7½
27	Ivan Ivanisevic	SRB	2617	7½
28	Baadur Jobava	GEO	2707	7½
29	Mircea Parligras	ROU	2598	7½
30	Evgeny Romanov	RUS	2624	7½
31	Baris Esen	TUR	2528	7½
32	Peter Heine Nielsen	DEN	2670	7½
33	Ivan Cheparinov	BUL	2664	7½
34	Jan Gustafsson	GER	2647	7½
35	Kaido Kulaots	EST	2601	7½
36	Ilya Smirin	ISR	2658	7½
37	Ivan Saric	CRO	2626	7½
38	Arman Pashikian	ARM	2642	7½
39	Romain Edouard	FRA	2600	7½
40	Victor Bologan	MDA	2671	7½
41	Alexander Beliavsky	SLO	2619	7½
42	Sergey Rublevsky	RUS	2678	7½
43	Sergey Volkov	RUS	2621	7½
44	Sanan Sjugirov	RUS	2643	7½
45	Dimitrios Mastrovasilis	GRE	2584	7
46	Dimitri Reinderman	NED	2601	7
47	Predrag Nikolic	BIH	2596	7
48	Ian Nepomniachtchi	RUS	2729	7
49	Stelios Halkias	GRE	2579	7
50	Samvel Ter-Sahakyan	ARM	2575	7
51	Tomi Nybäck	FIN	2656	7
52	Laurent Fressinet	FRA	2693	7
53	Luka Lenic	SLO	2623	7
54	Avetik Grigoryan	ARM	2608	7

393 players, 11 rounds

19...♘xc3 20.bxc3 ♗a3



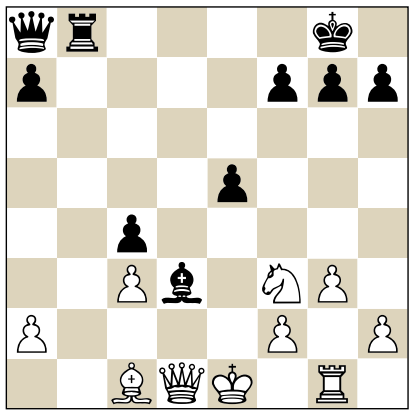
It's unbelievable how strong a d3 bishop can be.

21.♗e3

White has to continue rearranging his pieces.

21.♖a1 was not a good idea because of 21...♗b2, and I am not only interested in taking the rook on a1, but also in attacking the c3 pawn!

21...♗xc1 22.♗xc1 ♖b8!



I was very happy with this move that forces White to play ♘d2 before playing ♗e3.

23.♘d2

White has to prevent Black from playing the rook to b1 and controlling the first rank.

23...♕d5

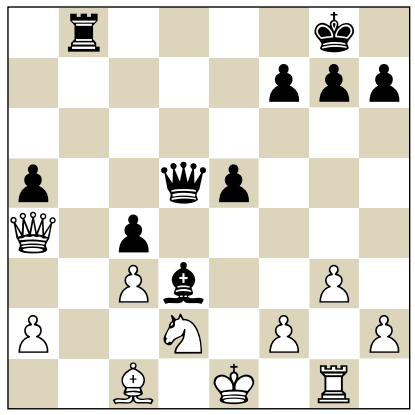
Finally my poor queen got out of a8 with the threat of ...♕a5 to put pressure on the c3 pawn. 23...♕c6 was also possible.

24.♕a4

Stopping Black from playing 24...♕a5, and attacking the pawn at the same time.

24...a5

The main focus for Black is not to allow White to untie himself.



25.♕d1

Here White had other opportunities, such as 25.g4, trying to get some air, but I certainly prefer to play this with black.

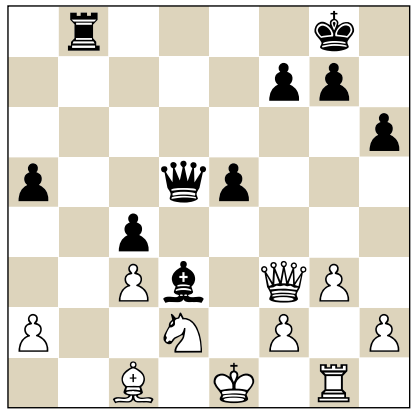
25.♕a3 is an attempt to control the dark squares and defend the c3 pawn, but after 25...e4 I really like Black's position.

And finally 25.♘f1, but then I would play 25...♕f3 26.♕d1 ♕f6, with at least great compensation.

25...h6 I kind of knew what was going to happen on the next move, or was I just hoping for it?

26.♕f3?

This practically loses the game. White could have tried 26.♘f1 or 26.♕g4, but it is really unpleasant to play such a position with white, especially when you're also in time-trouble.



26...♖b1!!

After this move my opponent got very upset. He realized quickly that his position is going to fall apart.

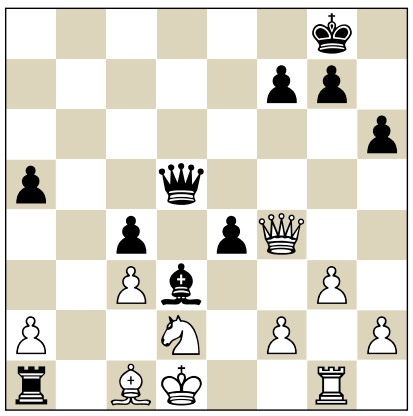
27.♔d1

As 27.♕xd5 runs into 27...♖xc1 mate. And if 27.♕d1 then 27...♖a1, and the rook on a1 is a killer: 28.a3 e4, and White is lost.

27...e4

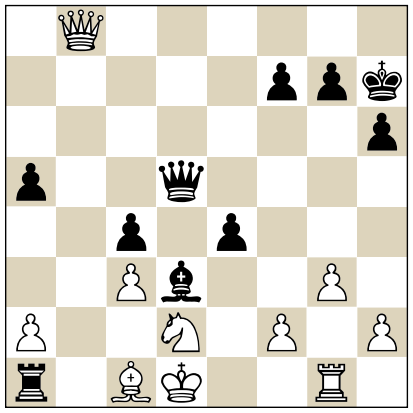
27...♕d7 was also winning, but after 28.♕a8+ (28.♘xb1 ♗e4+ would win the queen) 28...♔h7 29.♕xa5 I didn't see the move 29...♕f5!, which wins on the spot.

28.♕f4 ♖a1



White cannot stop my queen from helping my rook and bishop in the attack, and once they are working together it will be hopeless for White.

29.♕b8+ ♔h7



30.g4

There was a beautiful line after 30.♕b2: 30...♖b1! and if 31.♘xb1 ♗c2+!! 32.♔xc2 (32.♔e2 ♕d3+ 33.♔e1 ♕d1 mate) 32...♕d3 mate.

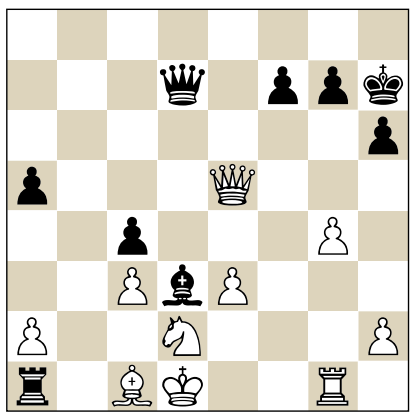
30...♕d7

It is interesting to notice that this was the only time in the game that one of my pieces moved backwards!

31.♕e5 e3

The last touch. After 31...♕a4+ 32.♘b3 Black still wins with 32...e3, but taking the knight would allow White to give perpetual check: 32...cxb3 33.♕f5+ ♔g8 34.♕c8+.

32.fxe3 32.♕xe3 would not help either because of 32...♕a4+ 33.♘b3 ♖xa2, and wins.



32...♕a4+ 33.♔e1 ♖xc1+ 34.♔f2 ♖xg1 And if White continued and took the rook then 35...♕d1+ wins a piece. So, he resigned.

■ ■ ■

The winners all agreed that playoff matches were in some sense fairer, although Polgar was keen to point out that 'there is not any system which gives a good feeling to everyone.' The main goal should be *standardization*, she suggests, including a tiebreak system which can be kept simple and be applied across all tournaments. She lamented the use of different time controls between various events as well, and suggests if FIDE is to simplify chess for the benefit of the games' fans, they should start by simplifying the *rules*, including those for the World Championship cycle, while leaving the game itself alone.

The quartet shared the first four prizes evenly, 13,500 euro between them. The prize fund represents a respectable sum for an open tournament, and on par with the previous edition in Rijeka, but not enough of an incentive to prevent some embarrassingly short draws in the last round, like the 7-mover between Constantin Lupulescu and Alexander Motylev, both of whom squeaked into World Cup qualification according to the chief arbiter's reckoning.

Sebastian Feller, meanwhile, earned himself 4,100 euro, which will likely be a trifle compared to the damages he will seek against the French Chess Federation, if they fail to prove his guilt in the ongoing cheating scandal that was on everyone's mind in Aix-les-Bains.

Jean-Claude Moingt, President of the French Federation, remains extremely confident that the evidence they have collected will be sufficient to sustain the charges, although he recognizes that an appeal to French civil court could involve the federation in protracted litigation. 'Of course it's very expensive, but it's a problem of ethics,' he insists, 'we have no choice.' A Federation appeal commission will meet in May to re-consider the conclusion of the Disciplinary Committee, which could result in up to a five year ban for Feller. ■

Short Stories

‘But where have all your pieces gone?’

A glance at the careers of Lasker, Capablanca and Alekhine, for example, shows that these Titans gave literally hundreds of exhibitions in countless countries.

In February, at the suggestion and arrangement of CJ de Mooi, President of the English Chess Federation, I gave a short simul tour of the UK which, by fortuitous circumstance, then continued onwards to the Republic of Ireland. Judging by the abundant enthusiasm of the amateurs who challenged me, not to mention the media coverage we received, it was a resounding success – so much so that we have already announced a lengthier reprise in October of this year.

Reflecting upon this, I wondered why simul tours were not more common these days. A glance at the careers of Lasker, Capablanca and Alekhine, for example, shows that these Titans gave literally hundreds of exhibitions in countless countries – far more than the contemporary coryphaei. Bobby Fischer’s gargantuan tour of the US in 1964 is still spoken about in awed tones nearly half a century later. In slightly more recent times, thanks to the initiative of Berry Withuis, one could find participants of the Hoogovens Chess Tournament criss-crossing the Netherlands in the weeks that followed Wijk aan Zee. Not only did such events popularize chess and provide a bridge between the humble club player and the chess legends, but they also provided a most welcome financial supplement to practitioners of that most impecunious of professions.

Simuls have played an important part in my own chess development. My first inauspicious encounter with a grandmaster came as a nine-year-old in January 1975 at the traditional post-Hastings, Soviets v English junior clash in London. Alexander Beliavsky, who had been assigned the older and stronger kids, found the going exceedingly tough, but Rafael Vaganian, in contrast, effortlessly blitzed his way past my group – the small fry. I am not entirely sure what I learned from this brutal demolition (and alas I no longer have the game score) but a few weeks later – on the 11th of February, to be precise – I successfully held Lajos Portisch – then ranked 4th in the world – to a draw, in Chester. The following January it was the turn of Viktor Kortchnoi to take on the cream of English youth (to which group I had now been promoted) in London. He played slowly and most determinedly – clearly intent upon stamping his authority. After seven gruelling hours he emerged largely triumphant, suffering just one solitary defeat – to your columnist.

My win was reported on that evening’s ‘News at Ten’, in newspapers around the world, and was heard on the radio as far afield as Australia – far bigger exposure, of course, than most tournaments receive. A few years ago, I gave a simul for the centenary of the British Club in Bangkok where, among others, I lost to a 12-year-old boy. I was quite annoyed about it at the time: I had lost a couple of vital tempi by unnecessarily trying to keep his king in the centre – simply because I had forgotten he couldn’t castle, having already moved his king twice. However, next day, when a photo of Thailand’s new chess ‘prodigy’ appeared on the front page of one of the country’s leading newspapers, I reflected that, in the grand scheme of things, perhaps it wasn’t such a bad outcome after all. The gain to Thai chess was considerable, whereas my pain was fleeting. Besides, scores were settled when I thrashed the same lad the following year...

I may have been a tad grumpy on that occasion, but at least I had the decency to shake my opponent’s hand. Alas that wasn’t true of Tigran Vartanovich Petrosian when he appeared at the Central YMCA, London, on the 15th January 1978. In mitigation, it should be stated that he faced a tough field, with the future GMs Plaskett, Hodgson, (the) King and I, numbering among his thirty opponents – although doubtless he had also been well remunerated. The former World Champion eventually staggered to 10 wins, 11 draws and 9 defeats in 5¼ hours and was in the most foul mood – so much so that when he came to resign against me (and others, as I recall) he simply shoved the pieces in the middle of the board and

stormed off. Exhausted and unhappy as he doubtless was, it was no excuse for an unseemly display of petulant and ungentlemanly behaviour – especially in front of children.

I can't be certain, but I think my own worst result in a simul came in Luanda, Angola, in 2006. There I endured a deadly combination of strong opposition (a few IMs and other members of the national team) and a power cut. Being daylight, visibility

Nigel Short facing a deadly combination of strong opposition and a power cut (not visible) in Angola in 2006.

was adequate, but standing on my feet for hours in the African heat was oppressive without air-con. I sweated my way to a score of just over 70%. Four years later Karpov, Dlugy and I gave exhibitions in Luanda, in the most bizarre of venues – a large roundabout in the city centre. With the noise of the traffic and heat it had all the makings of a disaster. Forewarned by my previous experience, I surreptitiously negotiated with the President of the Federation, Dr. Jaime, to ensure I got by far the softest opposition. I sped my way to victory, leaving Anatoly and Max to suffer on for a few more hours.

I have played chess in some fairly obscure places, including a number of countries – like Malawi and Ethiopia – where they had never previously seen a grandmaster. While club players in major European cities can afford to be slightly blasé about such tours, it represents a fantastic opportunity for aficionados in the more peripheral parts of the chess community: these events are often inspirational and fondly recalled by participants for years afterwards. While the Hispanic countries of Central America are by no means as isolated as, say, the African cities of Maputo, Blantyre and Addis Ababa, they are nevertheless not exactly on the main tournament circuit. Partly to earn a little pocket-money, but also to satisfy an insatiable appetite for travel, I organized a tour in the region in 2009. It was an obviously beneficial situation: most of these countries had not seen a player of my strength for decades – if at all – and were therefore eager to welcome me. A few weeks after the initiation of negotiations though, a curious thing started to happen: some previously 'guaranteed' agreements were abruptly withdrawn on the flimsiest of pretexts. When the tour eventually proceeded, on a rather more modest scale than originally envisaged, I discovered the reason: it emerged that the FIDE President of the Americas, Jorge 'Darth' Vega, had either telephoned or written to the federations requesting that they did not invite me on the grounds that I was an 'enemy of FIDE' – a thoroughly reprehensible action from a high official of a body that purports to promote chess.

By the age of 13 I was, frankly-speaking, too strong for participating in simuls but I gave it one last shot, against Boris Spassky. I needn't have bothered: his absurdly early draw offer robbed me of my appetite for the fight. I then watched jealously, however, as Julian Hodgson and Glenn Flear gunned him down mercilessly on the boards around me. Boris only emerged with a plus score by cleaning up on the lower boards. Afterwards he described the exhibition as the toughest of his life and said that he would not do it again – even for double the money.

Incidentally, Boris has the best technique for dealing with opponents who insist on continuing in hopelessly lost positions. He first goes into an exaggeratedly deep think, then looks up and 'innocently' asks: 'But where have all your pieces gone?' The embarrassment invariably causes abrupt resignation.

I shall conclude this paean to the venerable tradition of simultaneous displays with a little story of increasing contemporary relevance. The last simul of the UK leg of my recent tour was at my alma mater, Bolton School. Most opponents are very polite, but occasionally one comes across someone profoundly irritating – in this case a young boy who had travelled with his father from Manchester. The little brat kept offering me draws by thrusting out his arm, which induced great mirth from his Dad as my displeasure increased. To make matters worse, I had already blown a substantial opening advantage after my diminutive antagonist showed himself to be surprisingly adept at tactics. Around this point CJ de Mooi unexpectedly repeated his public announcement about no consultation being permitted and I immediately understood something was afoot. Thankfully the boy then showed himself to be as inept at endings as he was at openings and I duly won. Afterwards two parents quietly informed me that they were almost certain that his father had been communicating moves to him from a hand-held computer. This is a massive problem that is not going to disappear. ■

‘Not even the warm-up games are easy in Iceland’

When I received an email in August of 2009 asking me to play in events in Iceland, I was admittedly quite shocked. Iceland?! I knew Iceland only in the context of being a country that isn’t nearly as icy as its name implies, especially compared to its neighbor, the similarly misleading Greenland. In terms of gaming, I knew it to be a great bridge country (my dad is an avid bridge player, and made sure to inform me of this fact) and I was aware that Bobby Fischer spent his final days there, but not much else. So naturally, when I was invited to play chess there, I wasn’t sure I was reading the email correctly.

Although I declined the initial offer to play in the Icelandic Team Championships and Reykjavik Open, I informed Einar Einarsson, a friend of Fischer and the former Nordic Chess President, that I would like to remain in contact. My friends and compatriots, GMs Vinay Bhat and Yury Shulman, had given me rave reviews of the Reykjavik Open, so I couldn’t afford to again miss this opportunity. As it turned out, I would get my chance to play in these two events this past March in Reykjavik. I represented the KR-Artillery club in the Icelandic League’s 1st division and took part in the MP Reykjavik Open.

As soon as I touched down at Keflavik International Airport, it was immediately apparent how beautiful Iceland is. Passing long stretches of barren land on the bus ride from the airport to Reykjavik, one can’t help but marvel at the beauty of the landscape and the peaceful atmosphere, not to mention the country’s cleanliness. A magnificent darkness covers the sky for large portions of the winter days, but there is plenty to do, whether it be hiking up (or in my case, just staring at) the majestic Mountain Esja, standing a breathtaking 915 meters high, or taking a relaxing trip to the famous Blue Lagoon, a geothermal spa. While Icelanders greatly celebrate their country’s peaceful nature, do not underestimate their brutality on the board, as they always prove a challenging foe!

My first test was against the KR-A club’s captain, Mr. Kristjan Stefansson, in a two-game blitz match at his law firm. Though I managed to make it out unscathed, I noted the determination in his game. As Mr. Einarsson gently put it, ‘not even the warm-up games are easy in Iceland.’ Unfortunately, he only told me that after I was struggling to fend off the friendly lawyer’s vicious attack, but at least he told me before I was to play the team games.

There is a first time for everything and for every chess player there should be a first time to visit Iceland. For **Robert Hess** that moment came this March, when an invitation to play in the Icelandic team competition and the Reykjavik Open took the American grandmaster to the country that is fabled for its sagas, geysers, volcanoes, music and amidst much more, chess!

CALLIE ERLANDSSON

That's what you get when you join the excursion during an Icelandic chess tournament. After the second round the organizers planned a trip called 'The Golden Circle Tour', which finished at Bobby Fischer's grave and naturally included a geyser.

The Icelandic Team Championships were played in a large college gymnasium with room for teams from all four divisions to compete. The rounds were played over two weekends, the first four in October and the last three in March. Playing conditions were excellent and the competition was very strong, including twelve 2600+ players such as recent Tata Steel B-group winner Luke McShane, Evgeny Miroshnichenko, and Tomi Nybäck, and one super GM in David Navara (who tied for first in Wijk aan Zee with McShane). Iceland provided many of its top Grandmasters as well, with Hannes Stefansson, Johann Hjartarson and Hedinn Steingrimsson all in attendance. The only rule I was informed of was that during each round, every team have at least four Icelandic players. This suited the winners, 'TB A', well as they fielded several Icelandic GMs, and therefore could use a line-up with four foreign GMs as well. Game points was the first tiebreak used, so the team that won all seven matches, 'Hellir A', only finished in third! My team was largely the cause of Hellir A's finish, as we were swept 8 to 0 by the top two teams in the first two rounds way back in October (when I unfortunately was unable to participate), but managed to score 1½ of 8 against Hellir A.

My personal results were strong, with a win against Icelandic GM Steingrimmsson, a draw against the Ukrainian GM Miroshnichenko, and a win against young Icelandic talent

Sverrir Thorgeirsson, who had drawn both McShane and Nybäck during the weekend. Unfortunately, the combination of my results, a huge upset by our second board FM Soren Bech Hansen over Africa's strongest player GM Ahmed Adly, and a decisive last round victory over the last place Haukar A team were not enough to avoid relegation, as football rules similar to the English Premier League apply. The bottom two teams in the 1st division drop to the 2nd division, while the top two in the 2nd division take their place, and seeing that the KR-A club began the season 0/16, futility could not be fully avoided.

Despite the result, I was incredibly impressed by my teammates. When I joined the team, I brought the average rating up by around 40 points and the average age down by about 10 years! It is not every day one gets to witness a seventy-eight year old like Gunnar Gunnarsson battle in one long chess game, let alone several. However, I got to actively participate in the group's true love: speed chess. Every Monday, close to thirty club members meet to play eleven rounds of game seven. While the blitz tournament is incredibly fun, make no mistake: it is as serious as a world championship match. Talking is not allowed, crowding around a certain board is frowned upon, and falling for a mate in seven is never out of the cards.

I managed to win all eleven rounds, to the delight of some members and the dismay of others. Yet, the record was utterly meaningless compared to the impression that was left on me. Several players nearing their eighties meeting each and every week to compete in a three hour blitz session with some opponents just half their age?! That was previously unheard of to me, but became perhaps the most admirable thing I had witnessed throughout my stay in Iceland.

After the blitz event I had a free day before the start of the MP Reykjavik Open and I thought I'd spend some time without chess. Mr. Einarsson was kind enough to show me some famous landmarks in Iceland – after all, he is the former president of Visa Iceland and knows what is best to see. My attempt to steer clear of chess were futile, as in our first visit to a small restaurant, I was told that it was Bobby Fischer's favorite place to eat. Then, at an old book store, I was shown where Bobby used to sit for hours just reading National Geographic magazines and other works of interest, and the picture of him hanging over the chair is a constant reminder of his presence. On a street nearing the gorgeous campus of the University of Iceland, there is a life-sized chess board, where people enjoy playing friendly games, perhaps with their sons or daughters as knights. It was becoming increasingly evident how important chess remains in Iceland.

Robert Hess (bottom right) at the weekly blitz evening of the KR-A chess club. 'Perhaps the most admirable thing I witnessed in Iceland.'

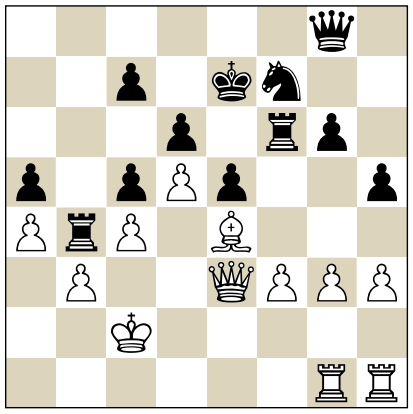
EINAR EINARSSON

The next day my friend, GM Josh Friedel, arrived in Reykjavik so it was now time to focus on the Reykjavik Open in memory of the late IM Ingi R. Jóhannsson, sponsored by MP Bank and Deloitte. Twenty-seven grandmasters were signed up, quite a few of whom had just competed in the Team Championships, and eleven of whom were rated over 2600. Also in attendance were one of the world's top female players, IM Harika Dronavalli from India, the youngest GM in the world, Illya Nyzhnyk of Ukraine, and the legendary Latvian Grandmaster Evgeny Sveshnikov. Special prizes were available for the best female player, the best male and female Nordic players, the best junior players, rating minus performance, and three rating categories. With all that to look forward to, what a great event it was to be!

The playing hall was Reykjavik's City Hall, which overlooks the elegant Tjörnin Lake. The aesthetics of the site were only countered by those on the chessboard. Each round, there was a special guest to make the first move on the top board. The organizers were kind and planned a trip after the second round, where players were permitted to attend a 'Golden Circle Tour.' Essentially, it was a day full of traveling and seeing the sights, finishing at Bobby Fischer's grave.

For eight days and nine rounds mostly beautiful chess was played,

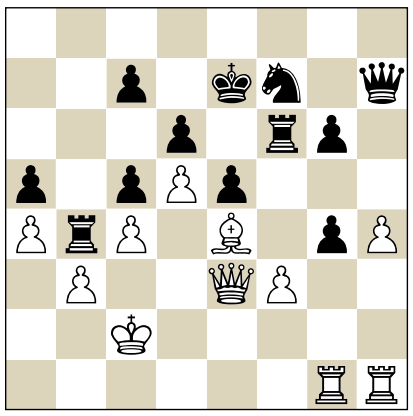
with the exception of the typical time trouble blunders. Early on, Belarus WGM Anna Sharevich was the surprise of the tournament, scoring 3½/4 with upset wins over GMs Hannes Stefansson and Alexandr Fier, and a lone draw with GM Josh Friedel. Let's look at that convincing win over Fier:



Sharevich-Fier
Reykjavik 2011 (4)
position after 34...♕g8

As both players neared the time control, pieces were being shuffled around. Black had the opportunity to swap minor pieces a bit earlier, but chose to keep them on the board. This position came about and Sharevich found her winning shot:

35.h4! 36.g4 cannot be stopped, leading White's breakthrough on the kingside. **35...♕h7?** More resilient was 35...♕f8, but Sharevich is still crashing through after the impending g4 break. **36.g4 hxg4**



37.h5! Of course 37.fxg4 still leaves White with a huge advantage, but this is forcing. The rest is easy. **37...♕g7 38.hxg6 ♖xg6 39.♗xg6 ♕xg6+ 40.♕e4 ♕f6 41.♕xg4 ♖b8 42.♖h5 ♖h8 43.♖xh8 ♕xh8 44.♕e6+ ♔d8 45.♖g2 ♕h7+ 46.♔b2 ♘h6 47.♖h2** Black resigned.

CALLE ERLANDSSON

Yury Kuzubov won on tiebreak ahead of Ivan Sokolov, Vladimir Baklan, Kamil Miton, Jon Ludvig Hammer, and Illya Nyzhnyk.

At the tournament's conclusion there were six winners with 7 out of 9, in tiebreak order: Yury Kuzubov, Ivan Sokolov, Vladimir Baklan, Kamil Miton, Jon Ludvig Hammer, and Illya Nyzhnyk. All were very deserving of victory, despite taking different routes to get there. Here is the game between co-champions Kuzubov and Nyzhnyk in the fifth round:

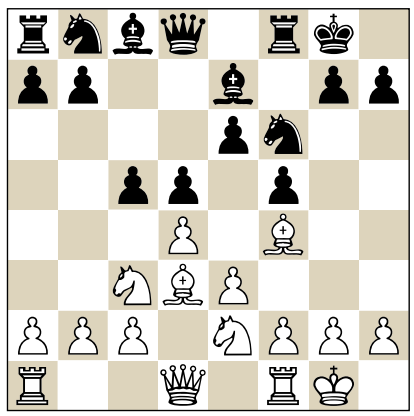
HD 12.11 – A80
Illya Nyzhnyk
Yury Kuzubov
Reykjavik 2011 (5)

This game featured not only co-winners, but also compatriots. At the time, both had 3½ out of 4, and little did the players know that they both would end the event in first place.

1.d4 f5

The Dutch! Most onlookers were pleasantly surprised to see Kuzubov play his first move. The Dutch Defense generally is uncommon in high-level games, with the notable exception being Hikaru Nakamura.

2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♗f4 e6 4.e3 ♗e7 5.♗d3 0-0 6.♘ge2 d5 7.0-0 c5

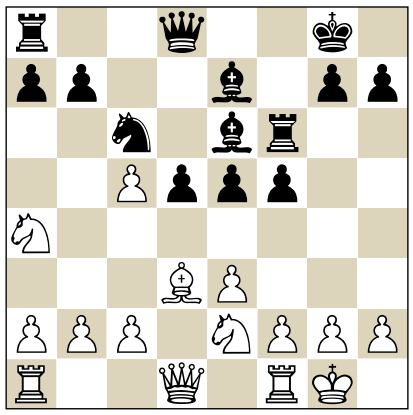


Black's position is quite solid, and Kuzubov goes forth with an active and good plan.

8.dxc5 ♘c6

Regaining the pawn was a possible idea, but leaves Black lacking activity with the poor light-squared bishop and an awkward looking pawn structure: 8...♗xc5 9.♘a4 ♗d6 10.c4.

9.♘a4 e5 10.♗g5 ♗e6 11.♗xf6 ♖xf6



White is temporarily up a pawn, but the material edge is completely offset by Black's two bishops advantage and

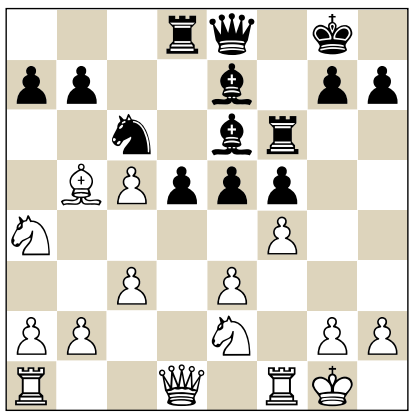
My coach GM Miron Sher has always told me that knights on the squares b3, b6, g3 and g6 are not good – they tend not to move, until it is too late.

huge center (not to mention that silly knight glued to the a4-square).

12.c3 ♕e8

12...b6 13.cxb6 axb6 was also possible and probably good, but why make White's life easier? Nyzhnyk's knight won't be leaving a4 any time soon (try move 31).

13.f4 ♖d8 14.♗b5

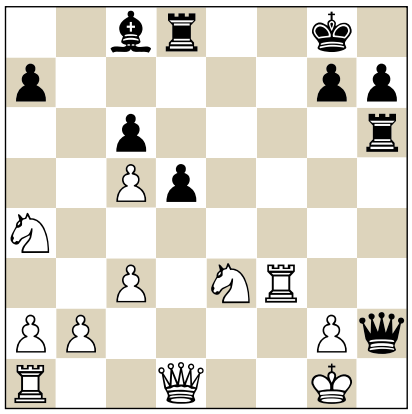


14...♖h6!

Ignoring the pressure in the center and forcing White to initiate the captures.

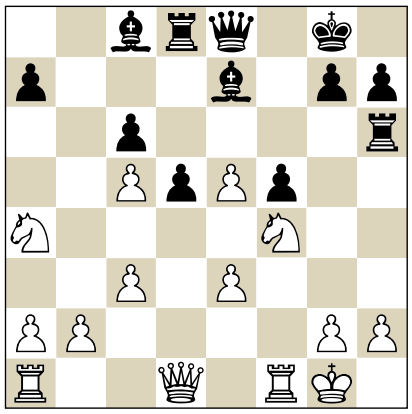
15.♗xc6 bxc6 16.fxe5 ♗c8 17.♘f4

The knight belongs in the center, but cannot yet find its home on d4 due to tactical resources: 17.♘d4 ♗g5 18.♘xf5 ♗xe3+ 19.♘xe3 ♕xe5 20.♖f3 ♕xh2+.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

I am not entirely sure of what is going on, but Black seems to have the upper hand.



17...g5!?

Kuzubov could have chosen a safer option with 17...♗f8 but the game move seems a bit more forceful. I'm not sure which move is 'better' but I do admire Kuzubov's tenacity.

18.♘d3 ♖h4

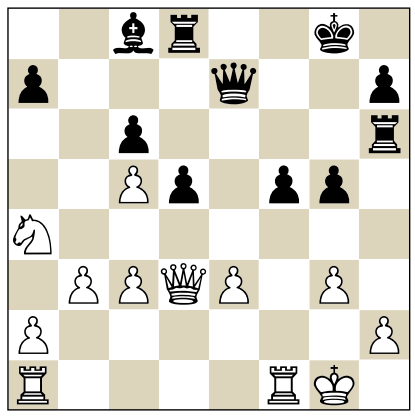
Again 18...♗f8 could have been played, but such a peaceful move was not meant to be played in this game.

19.♘f2?

Perhaps it was the right time to get the knight back into the action (a common theme from this game). Black is going for ...♗f8-g7, so it may as well be met by relocating the sidelined knight to d3: 19.b3 ♗f8 20.♘ab2 ♗g7 21.♕d2 and White is doing well.

19...♗f8 20.g3 ♖h6 21.♘d3 ♗g7 22.b3 Several moves too late! Now Black can capture the pawn, and the knight must still remain on a4, as many pawns are hanging.

22...♗xe5 23.♘xe5 ♕xe5 24.♕d4 ♕e7 25.♕d3



25...♖e6!

Giving up the f-pawn actually helps Black, as the light-squared bishop is freed. If White doesn't capture, then the position is just strategically lost.

26.♕xf5

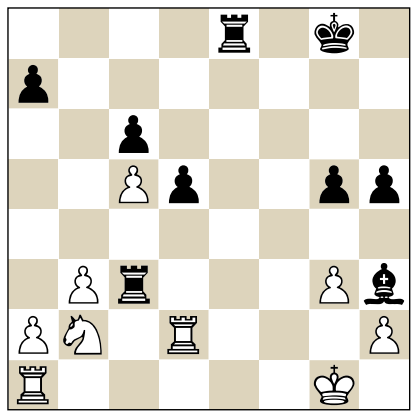
26.♖ae1 ♖e4 is neither good nor appealing for White.

26...♖xe3 27.♕f6 ♕xf6 28.♖xf6 ♗h3 29.♖f2 ♖de8 30.♖d2 h5 31.♘b2

Finally! Unfortunately for Nyzhnyk, the position is already lost.

31.♖c1 h4 32.gxh4 gxh4 doesn't exactly help White.

31...♖xc3

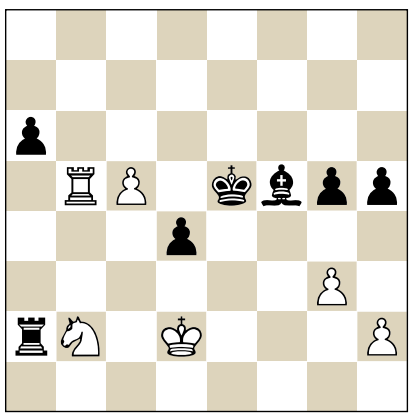


Despite equal material, the result is no longer in doubt. Black has a dominating position, so the rest of the game doesn't require commentary.

CALLE ERLANDSSON

Robert Hess's collapse after a splendid start was fully to be blamed on a vicious ice attack.

32.b4 ♔g7 33.♘d3 ♗f5 34.♘b2 ♖e4 35. a3 ♔g6 36.♔f2 ♖e6 37. ♘d1 ♖b3 38.♖e2 ♖xe2+ 39.♔xe2 d4 40.♖a2 ♔f6 41.♔d2 ♔e5 42.♖b2 ♖xa3 43.b5 cxb5 44.♖xb5 ♖a2+ 45.♘b2 a6



White is losing the c-pawn and will be down two pawns. Finding no point in continuing to fight a lost cause, White resigned.

The Icelandic charge was led by GM Hannes Stefansson, who fought back from a tough loss to Sharevich to end with a very respectable 6½ out of 9. Gudmundur Gislason, rated just 2291 entering the event, finished with a fantastic 6 out of 9 to secure an IM norm and 28 rating points. Not a common feat for a 47-year-old!

As for myself, the first two-thirds of the event were extraordinary. I was 5 out of 6, with a win over the silver-medal winner Sokolov and draws with GMs Stelios Halkias and Luke McShane. My performance rating was over 2700. Then I hit a brick wall in Norwegian GM Jon Ludvig Hammer, who regained his form after an early hiccup against IM Kiprian Berbatov, somehow survived and drew a lost ending against fellow Norwegian FM Nicolai Getz and then got destroyed by Lithuanian GM Aloyzas Kveinys. My roommate Josh Friedel and I tried to find a reason for my poor finish and obvious decline in play, and figured it right to blame it on an ice attack: as we were walking back to the exquisite Guesthouse Isafold where we were staying, large chunks of ice came crashing down just a few feet behind us. It is easier to blame such poor results on a bad omen, anyways ☺. A fine result turned average, but here is my best game of the event against Sokolov:

NI 9.12 – E48
Ivan Sokolov
Robert Hess
Reykjavik 2011 (4)

This game was played in the fourth round, with both Ivan and myself standing at a perfect 3 out of 3. This round was on the infamous double-round day, and was played at 9.30 in the morning. As a player hailing from the U.S., I am used to this exact scenario, which could have given me a slight mental edge.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4. e3 c5 5.♗d3

No time to study opening theory?

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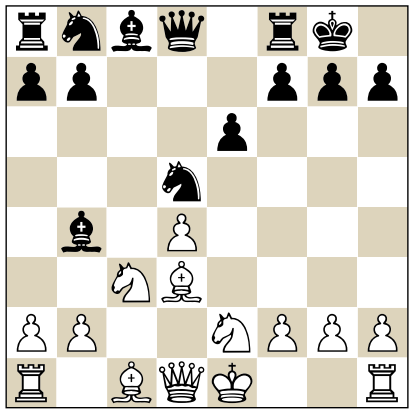
Shock your opponent with an SOS!

For some reason this move surprised me, as I expected 5.♘e2. Ivan has played many different variations against the Nimzo-Indian (after all, he has almost 1300 games as White in the database), but I still did not feel he would play this move order. Nonetheless, I stuck to my guns and aimed for an isolated queen pawn position, as I have had success against these positions as of late.

5...0-0 6.♘e2 cxd4 7.exd4 d5 8.cxd5 ♘xd5



9.♗c2!?

This idea I had not actually seen before, but made some sense to me during the game. Ivan wanted to force a weakness on my kingside after 10.♕d3 and allow his bishop to b3, attacking the important d5-square. Looking back (as hindsight is 20/20), I feel that this is not the most testing option. This strategy would be more effective in the long-term if the knight was on f3, not on e2.

The main move 9.0-0 is played much more frequently in this position.

9...♘c6 10.♕d3 g6 11.0-0 ♗e7!

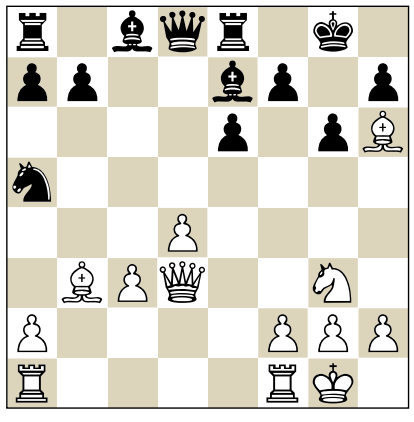
This move serves two purposes: the bishop must retreat eventually after exchanging knights on c3, and now Black threatens ...♘b4.

12.♗b3

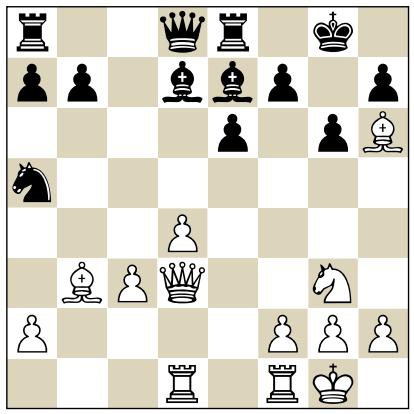
The text move is practically forced, as 12.a3 ♘xc3 13.bxc3 (13.♕xc3 ♗f6 14.♗e3 ♗d7) 13...e5 leaves Black no worse, and probably a bit better.

12...♘xc3 13.bxc3 ♘a5 14.♗h6 ♖e8 15.♘g3

My coach GM Miron Sher has always told me that knights on the squares b3, b6, g3 and g6 are not good – they tend not to move, until it is too late. This game provided strong evidence for the adage!



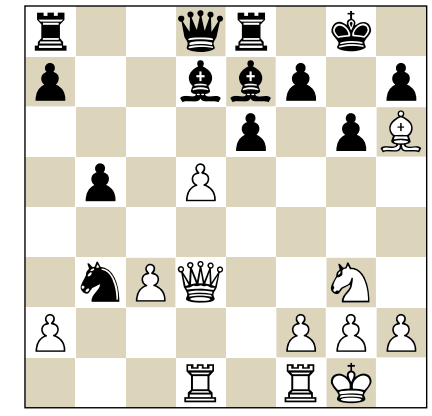
15...♗d7 16.♖ad1



16...b5!

Tempting was 16...♗c6, but after 17.c4 ♗d6 18.♖fe1 ♘xb3 19.axb3 ♕h4 20.♗d2 ♖ad8 21.♗c3 I didn't feel comfortable with my weakened dark squares.

17.d5 ♘xb3



18.axb3?

It is hard to question the decision to capture a traded piece, but Black is now in control. After the game Ivan told me that 18.d6 was his intended move, but he decided against it after 18...♘c5 19.dxe7 (a better attempt was 19.♕d4 ♗f6 20.♕xc5 ♕b6 21.♕b4 ♖ac8 22.♘e4 ♗e5 23.♗e3 ♕c6 24.♗xa7 ♗xc3 25.♘xc3 ♕xc3, leading to what should be an easily drawn position with opposite-colored bishops) 19...♕xe7 20.♕d6 ♕xd6 21.♖xd6 and now the strong move that Ivan missed before playing 17.d5: 21...♖ec8, with a healthy pawn advantage for Black. Perhaps not yet won, but it's obvious that White faces an incredibly difficult task in trying to salvage a half point.

18...exd5 19.♕xd5 ♗g4

Forcing a queen trade, leaving me with a huge advantage.

20.f3

20.♕e5 ♗f6 only makes matters worse for White.

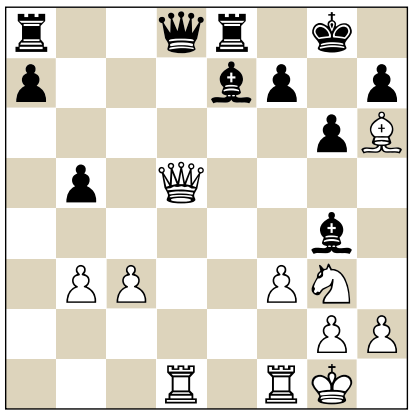
Spot the non-Icelandic GM! Helgi Olafsson, Ivan Sokolov, Jon Arnason, Fridrik Olafsson, Johann Hjartarson, Throstur Thorhallsson and Hannes Stefansson.

CALLE ERLANDSSON

Reykjavik 2011

1	Yury Kuzubov	IGM	UKR	2627	7
2	Ivan Sokolov	IGM	NED	2643	7
3	Vladimir Baklan	IGM	UKR	2602	7
4	Kamil Miton	IGM	POL	2600	7
5	Jon Ludvig Hammer	IGM	NOR	2606	7
6	Illya Nyzhnyk	IGM	UKR	2563	7
7	Luke McShane	IGM	ENG	2683	6½
8	Sune Berg Hansen	IGM	DEN	2603	6½
9	Gawain Jones	IGM	ENG	2578	6½
10	Boris Chatalbashev	IGM	BUL	2602	6½
11	Stelios Halkias	IGM	GRE	2579	6½
12	Abhijeet Gupta	IGM	IND	2580	6½
13	Yannick Pelletier	IGM	SUI	2593	6½
14	Aloyzas Kveinys	IGM	LTU	2506	6½
15	Ahmed Adly	IGM	EGY	2640	6½
16	Alexandr Fier	IGM	BRA	2586	6½
17	Hannes Stefansson	IGM	ISL	2557	6½
18	Kiprian Berbatov	IM	BUL	2454	6
19	Tiger Hillarp Persson	IGM	SWE	2524	6
20	Evgeny Miroshnichenko	IGM	UKR	2670	6
21	Tapani Sammalvuo	IM	FIN	2471	6
22	Jan Gustafsson	IGM	GER	2647	6
23	Joshua Friedel	IGM	USA	2529	6
24	Harika Dronavalli	IM	IND	2524	6
25	Evgeny Sveshnikov	IGM	LAT	2527	6
26	Bragi Thorfinnsson	IM	ISL	2417	6
27	Gudmundur Gislason	--	ISL	2291	6
28	Krikor Sevag Mekhitarian	IGM	BRA	2529	6
29	Robert Hess	IGM	USA	2565	5½
30	Simon Williams	IGM	ENG	2507	5½

166 players, 9 rounds

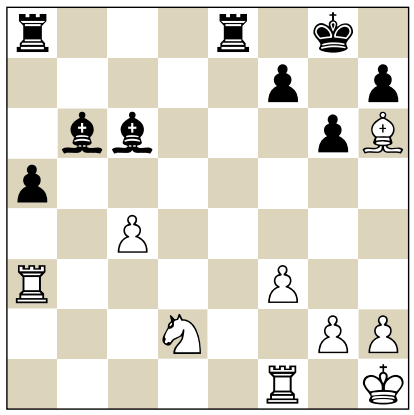


20...♕xd5? The text move left me with good winning chances, but I was upset I did not play 20...♕b6+ even though I had seen it during the game. I was worried about my king becoming 'too exposed' but I recognized how foolish I was. For example, 21.♔h1 ♗e6 22.♕e5 f6 23.♕e1 ♗xb3 24.♖d7 ♕e6 is straightforward and easily winning.

21.♖xd5 ♗e6 22.♖xb5 a6 23.♖a5
23.♖b7 would not have made much of a difference, as 23...♗d5 24.♖c7 ♗d8 25.♖d7 ♗xb3 still leaves me with a passed rook-pawn and the two strong bishops.

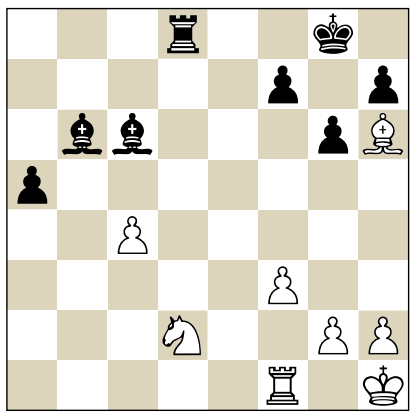
23...♗xb3
Material may be equal, but the two bishops make it very clear that Black has all the winning chances.

24.♘e4 ♗d8 25.♖a3 ♗d5 26.♘d2 a5 27.c4 ♗b6+ 28.♔h1 ♗c6

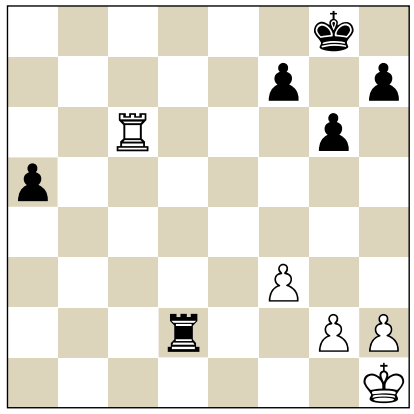


29.♖d3
At first, I was not sure about my winning chances in the variation 29.c5 ♗xc5 30.♖c3 ♗b5 31.♖xc5 ♗xf1 32.♘xf1, as I was worried that White can sacrifice a minor piece for the pawn and try to sweat out a draw. However, the resulting ending should indeed be winning and perhaps Ivan recognized that.

29...♖ed8 30.♖xd8+ ♖xd8



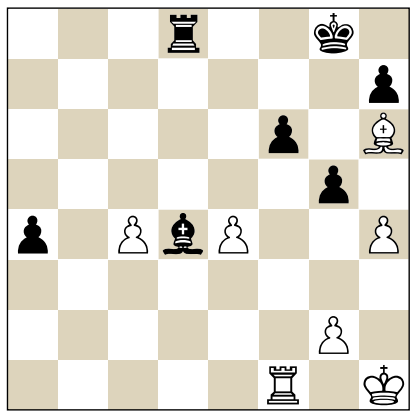
31.♗g5?
Losing immediately. Ivan's best chance was 31.c5 ♗xc5 32.♖c1 ♗b4 (we both missed 32...♖d5 and Black may not need worry about the rook+4 vs rook+3 pawn ending after 33.♘e4 ♗e7 34.h3 ♗d7) 33.♖xc6 ♗xd2 34.♗xd2 ♖xd2.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

I must admit that we both were not sure if this position is winning for Black or if White escapes with a draw, but regardless it was Ivan's best course of action. I guess I must go back to studying those rook endings!

31...f6 32.♗h6 g5 33.♘e4 ♗xe4 34.fxe4 ♗d4 35.h4 a4



Seeing as Black wins the rook for the a-pawn, White resigned.

Ultimately, I can honestly say that I loved my experience in Iceland. Everyone I met was cordial, I was able to see many historical landmarks, and I played strong competition in the game I love.

The country's remarkably safety also helps assure that I will return to Iceland in the near future. In fact, the biggest 'case' as of late is regarding whether the Lewis Chessmen originated in Norway or Iceland. This is a very hot topic in Iceland, clearly indicating how much Icelanders value chess. What isn't a matter of debate, though, is that it would be a good idea for chess players to make a tournament stop in Iceland. ■

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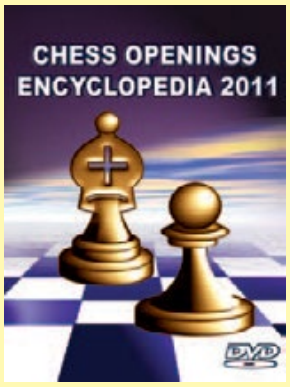

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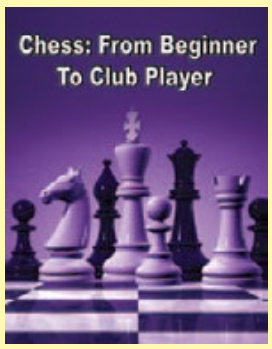

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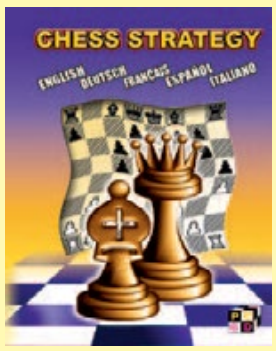

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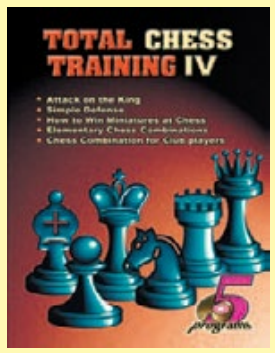

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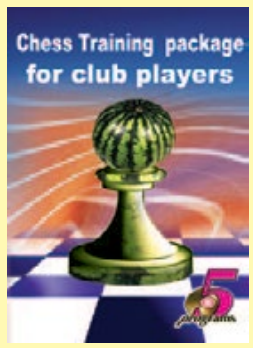

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Charles Hertan

Forcing Moves

The New Geometry

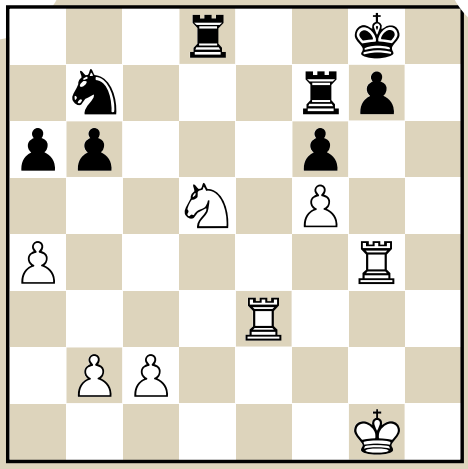
Over roughly five centuries of (western) study there were two principal 'actors' in chess analysis: the game score (featuring the winner as 'hero'), and the annotator. The annotations of super-GM's carried an air of inevitability, implying their games were won by iron logic, without the slightest taint of Lady Luck. Long, sometimes dazzling variations were trotted out to prove this thesis.

Alas, the strongest entities ever to play the game emerged in the last decades and changed all that. Replacing the duet, each analysis becomes a ménage à trois, with the mighty computer having the final say: 'Dear human, your idea is quite lovely, but here's the truth of the matter ...' Comments like these from Kasparov's epic *My Great Predecessors* become routine: 'In the opinion of Tal and Gligoric Black's pluses are worth the sacrificed exchange, but the computer monster replies 17.♕xf4 and demands detailed evidence...' or 'Petrosian could have won, but for this a knowledge was required of higher computer geometry...' The steely – but fascinating – emissions of Rybka et al rewrite old assumptions daily.

Level of difficulty:
1-4 stars, 1 is 'easiest' and 4 'most difficult'.
The star rating refers to the difficulty of finding all the relevant variations, not just finding the right key move.

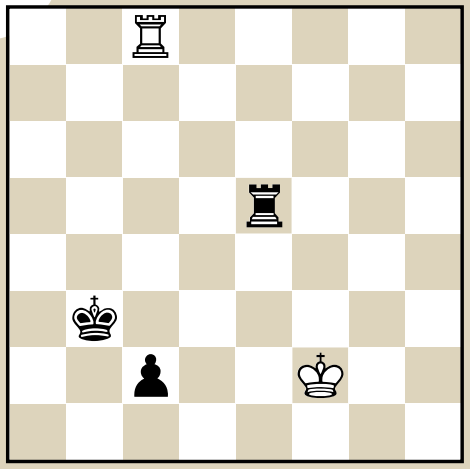
Solutions on page 83

1 ★★★½



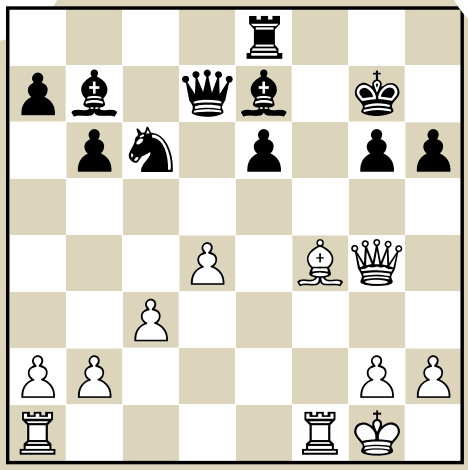
Fritz would be proud
White to move and win

2 ★★½☆



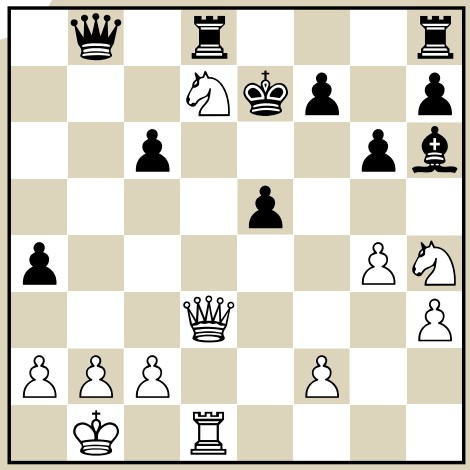
Geometry 101: Refute 1.♖b8+, 1.♖c7 and 1.♔f3
White to move; Black wins

3 ★★★☆



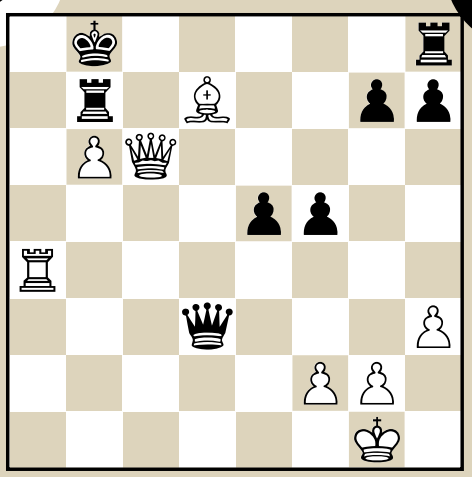
A routine day at the office
White to move and win

4 ★★★☆



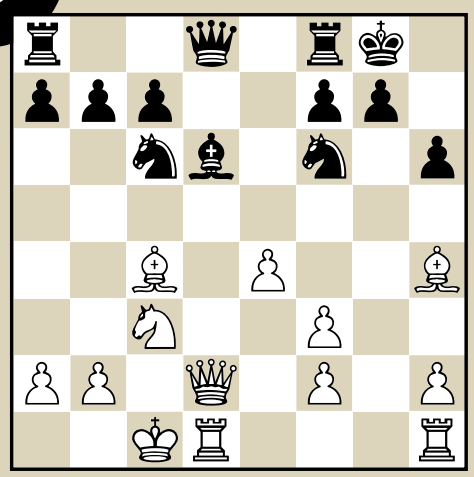
Crisp execution, old style
White to move and win

5 ★★★½



Advanced Geometry
White to move and win

6 ★★★★



Don't try this insanity at home
Black to move and win

Bronstein and Tal

A Tale of Two Magicians

'He was a genius! A genius!' Viktor Kortchnoi, who isn't prone to compliments, burst into this tirade when I asked him if Bronstein was a great player. 'Botvinnik said Bronstein was very good in the transition from the opening to the middlegame, but that was putting it mildly', Viktor Lvovich went on, 'In actual fact Bronstein demonstrated a multitude of ideas in that phase that were pure discoveries. A genius is a person who is ahead of his time, and in the period 1945-51 Bronstein surpassed everyone in his understanding of chess. If there hadn't been a Bronstein then, Tal wouldn't have come to prominence in the chess world.'

A Tale of Two Magicians

Genna Sosonko

Both Bronstein and Tal espoused the same approach to chess. They looked at a game of chess not as a theorem that required proof, but as a kind of performance in which human emotions played no less significant a role than what happened on the chessboard.

The definition of 'genius' isn't a mathematical formula, genius can't be taught or learnt. What is a genius? Are there levels of genius? Is a genius always brilliant? When does a genius stop being a genius?

In answer to the question 'They say you're a genius?' the prominent physicist Lev Landau replied seriously: 'No, I'm not a genius, but I'm very talented'. And Robert Fischer was extremely brief: 'Genius. It's a word. What does it really mean? If I win I'm a genius. If I don't, I'm not.'

Mstislav Rostropovich claimed: 'The geniuses I've known – Shostakovich, Prokofiev – were extreme egotists. Probably when God gives out this kind of sun a person involuntarily starts to guard that sun. Prokofiev, for example, no matter where he was invited to, left at 11 in the evening. He even left the Kremlin, where Stalin was the host – it didn't matter. And when Shostakovich was a guest somewhere, when he considered it necessary, he said: "We've had something to eat and drink, it's time to go home." They didn't negotiate about that. They were simply guarding their genius. They were protecting what was stored in them so that they could give it to people.'

It's possible to disagree with the famous musician about the reasons for the egocentricity that is a characteristic of people who have been endowed with unusual talent, but both David Bronstein and Mikhail Tal – completely different people in terms of their personalities – were also egocentric, although their egocentricity was also dressed in different clothes. And they both had huge ambition that was proportionate to the scale of their talent.

Often in people who are gifted with an extraordinary talent their prime coincides with the years of their youth, and their subsequent life is just a gradual, or sometimes even sudden, extinguishing of the 'divine flame'. Genius can only manifest itself in a condition of inspiration and enthusiasm, but inspiration can't go on forever; you can't make that condition to order. Rimbaud was a poet for only four years. Mickiewicz didn't write poetry in his last 20 years, but the poets who wrote up until their deaths often turned out to be just their own namesakes, from whom the divine light had departed at some point.

Neither Bronstein nor Tal were geniuses for the duration of their entire careers. For Tal it was the stretch 1957-60 and perhaps a few more years. Up until the end of his life he sometimes managed 'Tal' games, and when he was already aging he achieved a long streak without losing, but something else is implied when we talk about the Tal phenomenon.

David Bronstein's peak occurred in the years immediately following the war (1945-51). Although he also played many fantastic games after that, the match with Botvinnik damaged something in him, and his unique and one-of-a-kind chess gradually turned

into the chess of a brilliant grandmaster, but without that 'ah!' of the early Bronstein games. And when we speak of a genius who was ahead of his time, we recall the Bronstein who was a hair's breadth away from Botvinnik and proved to be a worthy opponent for the world champion.

Both Bronstein and Tal espoused the same approach to chess. Believing that the most interesting component of the game was the combination, they both very consciously included elements of risk and bluff in the playing process. They looked at a game of chess not as a theorem that required proof, but as a kind of performance in which human emotions played no less significant a role than what happened on the chessboard.

Both the one and the other had a subtle sense of their opponent's condition, and they weren't indifferent to the reaction of the audience, to applause. I think that both players' constant participation in the Moscow Blitz Championships can be explained not only by their love for blitz, but also by the live contact with the public, the dense ring that surrounded the tables in Sokolniki Park, the loud announcements of the results after every round, and the publicity that was plastered all over the playing square and outside it.

At the interzonal tournament in Saltsjöbaden (1948) Bronstein often played blitz with Miguel Najdorf in his free time, almost always beating him. In his tournament game with Najdorf, in severe time trouble, he offered a draw in a worse position. Najdorf refused. Bronstein got up from his chair and, pacing up and down the stage, started calmly looking at the positions on the neighbouring boards, watching his opponent out of the corner of his eye. A minute later Najdorf lost his inner composure, shook hands and accepted the offer.

At the 1959 Candidates' tournament Tal fell into a critical position in his game with Fischer. The American recorded a winning move on his scoresheet, as it seemed to Tal (later it was proven that even in that case Black had a defence), and gave his opponent a searching look. As if nothing had happened, getting up slowly, Tal began his usual walk around the tables where his rivals were playing. Fischer hesitated, crossed out the move, made another, wrong one, and eventually lost.

Bronstein often quoted Larsen, who had said that it was he, Bronstein, who had taken the shine off Botvinnik by demonstrating how to play against him. Indeed, in 1951 Bronstein showed what kind of play was most unpleasant for Botvinnik, but Mikhail Tal achieved the real success. For the sake of fairness we should note that neither top grandmaster, introducing a hot seasoning to the iron logic of Botvinnik's chess, could prove that spices were capable of replacing the dish itself. And is this even possible: a seasoning can give a dish a new flavour, make it more refined, bring pleasure, but replace it?

David Bronstein had a habit of losing in the first round: he needed some time to warm up. But as he gathered speed he could develop a hurricane pace. In the Moscow-Prague match in 1946, after losing in the first round Bronstein conceded only one draw to his opponents in the following 11. Tal also often lost at the start. One of many examples was the tournament in Bled (1961) when, after losing to Fischer in the first round, Tal eventually caught and then overtook the American. And more: in their best years both of them played with unbelievable vigour and concentration, and there was no way their opponents could avoid feeling that pressure.

Fischer hesitated, crossed out the move, made another, wrong one, and eventually lost.

There was a period for both Bronstein and Tal when they frenetically worked on their chess. They devoted long days, weeks and months to passionate research. But they both preferred the game itself to any part of the training process. Bronstein attributed the phenomenon of Capablanca to the endless blitz games that the young Cuban played in New York in his student years when he was developing his technique. Bronstein knew what he was talking about: the years that Devik spent in the Kiev House of Pioneers on five-minute games, and subsequently in Moscow, developed in him an automatism, speedy decision-making and instant orientation in the most tangled positions.

Larisa Volpert recalls how in 1947 the young Bronstein gave her some half-joking advice: 'If you want to improve at chess, play as much blitz as possible, and play eugenics, not platonics'. (An expression often used by blitz players at the time: 'platonics' was what ordinary games were called, and 'eugenics' – games for money.)

Despite his quick and precise calculating, when he tried to calculate the position to the end Bronstein often suffered from a shortage of time. Of course, he didn't have such terrifying time troubles as Reshevsky, but while the American, playing when his flag was about to drop, jiggled on his chair, glanced at his opponent's scoresheet and got very agitated, Bronstein sank into his seat and seemed to merge with the board and pieces, only casting quick glances at the clock face. A shortage of time only urged him on, and often his opponent, as if under a spell, stared at Bronstein's hanging flag and made the first blunder. The same could also be said about the incredible blitz player Tal, who often repeated: 'Calmness is my little sweetheart!'

Once, when after a game Bronstein was shown a piece sacrifice

that was very dangerous for him, he just smiled: 'Come on, my opponent doesn't play like that...' A phrase that was repeated almost word for word many times by Mikhail Tal. And Tal's claim that 'in chess two times two doesn't always equal four' was first formulated by David Bronstein.

Neither of them particularly needed a coach, but more a loyal, close friend who, by constantly being with them, would create the mood, instill confidence and dispense compliments while not forgetting that it was time to have lunch or dinner or go for a walk – as a genius often turns out to be less adapted to life than mere mortals. For Bronstein this person was Boris Samoilovich Vainstein, and for Tal – Alexander Naftalevich Koblentz. All the others who worked with them can be called whatever you like – sparring partners, seconds, assistants, consultants. Vainstein and Koblentz were everything to them.

Both Bronstein and Tal had obvious literary talent, but neither of them liked to write, preferring to dictate their articles and books. 'I'm not a writer,' Tal once let drop, 'I'm a speaker. Not a loud speaker, but a speaker...' And Bronstein preferred dictating his books to his co-authors: Georgy Smolyan, Sergey Voronkov and Tom Fürstenberg.

Half a century ago the young St. Petersburg man of letters Andrei Arjev was on holiday with a friend in Yalta. They were both low on funds, to the extent that they didn't even have enough money to get home. Suddenly they saw David Ionovich Bronstein walking on the path in the park. The friends immediately recognized the renowned grandmaster from his photographs. Summoning up their courage and remembering his first name and patronymic, they approached him and honestly confessed their sad situation. 'Return it when you get back', David Ionovich said, and gave the necessary amount to the complete strangers. Who else would have behaved like that? Perhaps only Tal, if he'd found a hundred-rouble note that had accidentally fallen behind the lining of his pocket.

Abroad, Bronstein didn't refresh in his mind the difference between the low-value rouble and the expensive foreign currency before each purchase, carelessly spending it on crazy things, from the point of view of his colleagues. Accustomed to foreign trips, knowing the true price differential, Soviet grandmasters brought back goods from abroad partly for their own needs and partly for profitable sale, and looked on Bronstein as a person not of this world. They came up with four rules that guided Bronstein in his foreign purchases. The main condition: the thing had to be expensive. The second: the purchase had to be non-transportable. The third: no one should have this thing in Moscow. The fourth: an acquisition couldn't be utilitarian in character and couldn't be convenient for use in the conditions of the Soviet Union.

At the same time he brought 80 records of some opera back from Argentina.

In America in 1954 Bronstein acquired a complete set of golf clubs. In London that same year, in a sports shop where Paul Keres bought tennis equipment, Bronstein, unable to and never having learnt to play tennis, but not wanting to be shown up by the Estonian grandmaster, bought a Slazenger racquet and a dozen brand-name balls. From Poland he brought home a pair of boxing gloves. In 1956 he acquired a tea service in Amsterdam, not thinking at all about the consequences associated with transporting it, and he held the fragile cups on his lap the whole way home on the plane. In Reykjavik he bought *The Count of Monte Cristo* in Icelandic and four identical copies of a newspaper with an article about Shakespeare.

Yury Averbakh recalls that in Buenos Aires once Bronstein went shopping with someone from the embassy: 'He comes back lugging a picture. His colleagues' faces fell – ??? David – "I couldn't just buy any old junk with a diplomat." At the same time he brought 80 records of some opera back from Argentina. After the tournament in Wijk aan Zee he acquired special tyres for a car at Keres's request. The weight was 70 kilos, far too much. He had to send them by sea. His wife Marina, seeing those tyres, cried, "You could at least have brought me some lipstick." '

Mark Taimanov recalled their trip to a chemist's in Zurich together in 1953. When Bronstein inquired about whether they had medicine for angina he was presented with a whole array of pills. 'Thank you, but don't you have anything else?' They brought him some other tablets. 'But perhaps you have some other kinds?' The shelf was soon empty, and Devik, handing over a considerable sum for everything, to the horror of his grandmaster colleagues, who were staggered by this absurd expenditure of valuable foreign currency, triumphantly left the chemist's shop.

At the same time he bought a chronometer in Zurich that displayed hundredths of a second. 'Devik, why do you need such a super-accurate clock?' 'I go to sporting events. I don't always agree with the arbiters, so now I can monitor things even at a sprint.'

Although Tal always had a long list of things with him when he went abroad, he tried to put off the procedure of shopping until the final days or transfer it to someone else's shoulders. 'He was wearing a torn jacket. With difficulty he was persuaded to buy a jacket

and shoes. He didn't go to a shop, he took a wad of money from his wallet and said, please, buy it all yourselves', recalled Leonid Shamkovich, who was with him at a tournament in Spain.

In Tilburg in 1980 Tal asked me to accompany him on a trip to the shops. Without even taking a look he agreed to everything the shop assistants offered him. Green five-guilder notes lay in his pockets alternately with one thousands (do I need to say that he never had a wallet?), and I remember his genuine surprise when he found another thousand in one of his side pockets. After finishing the shopping operation for the list made at home earlier, Misha switched to things for his own use. 'Everything is clear with this,' Tal put an end to our shopping trip. 'At home we'll say that they don't have this in Holland yet.'

It would seem that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dawning freedom should have brought Bronstein and Tal enormous relief. That didn't happen. Having lived their lives in a certain atmosphere of pressure, they couldn't adapt to the rarefied air of post-Soviet Russia. They were people of the spirit: when an outburst of the material began in society it became clear that this wasn't what either of them had dreamt about. Carrying within themselves their accumulated life experience in the conditions that were presented to them by the times and the circumstances, both could only live in the system of coordinates of the Soviet Union, as long as they were allowed to go abroad when they wanted to. It wasn't surprising that Bronstein didn't end up in the West after his long travels, and Tal openly suffered in Germany, where he tried to live in the last period of his life.

Despite many shared characteristics, there was also an enormous difference between them. Above all, a factual one. Becoming world champion at the age of 23, Mikhail Tal achieved with unusual ease what his forerunner had only managed to set his sights on. David Bronstein tied his World Championship match and almost became world champion. Almost. But chess, like life, is merciless: a marksman who just barely misses the bull's eye and remains unrewarded is no better than one who shoots past the target.

When his best achievements were behind him, Bronstein didn't want to reconcile himself to reality and constantly referred to events that were long past. Tal didn't try to take refuge in the past and, caring little about the future, tried to extract as much pleasure as possible from the present. He simply lived, not thinking about what people would say, think or write about him.

Bronstein was very obsessed with other people's opinions on his place in chess, and numerous plaudits from famous chess players and ordinary amateurs adorned his last books. But he left the most lavish praise to his co-

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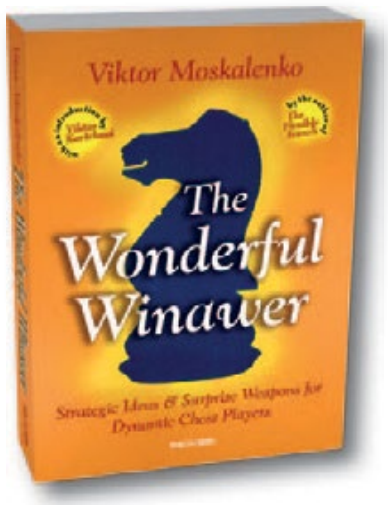

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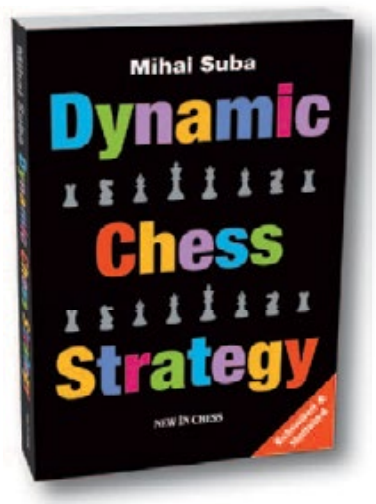

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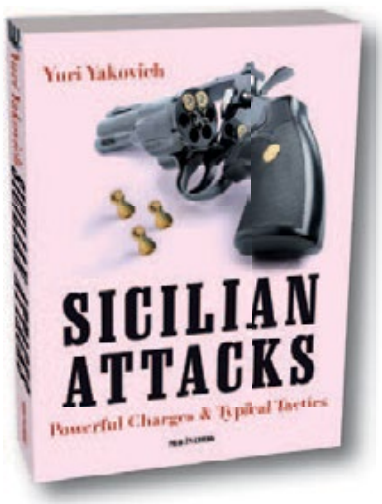

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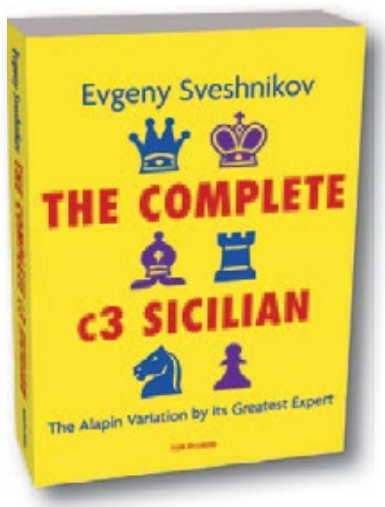

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authors, expressing his extraordinarily high self-evaluation in their voices.

There's nothing wrong with caring about eternity, but this posthumous ambition always turned into one more joke for Tal. Hemming and hawing, he read his obituary: 'It will probably suit me – if I accidentally end up at the police station I'll show them this piece of paper – if I'm gone, who can they charge?'

Bronstein left an extensive archive behind, in which everything was preserved, starting almost from his very first steps in chess. Tal didn't keep trophies, medals, photographs or certificates. It's impossible to even imagine him doing that.

Congenitally inclined to engage with the past, Bronstein kept up an endless argument with it. He was consumed with visions of this past that terrorized him, never being truly over for him, and in his memory everything he'd lived through existed only in one tense – the past continuous. He never did acquire the essential qualities for a person – the ability to forget, to erase, to free himself from his memories – and was always tortured by his match with Botvinnik, not having the strength either to spit it out or to swallow it, and repeated for the rest of his life: it was unfair, it was unfair. Bronstein never managed to distance himself from that match, to try and move it to the backwoods of his mind, and then to forget it. But forgetting is more a gift than an art. That gift wasn't bestowed on him.

He stitched for himself the clothes of a romantic, playing for beauty and not for a meagre point on the tournament table, but he also garbed himself in the rags of a martyr and a sufferer, in which he appeared regardless of the political climate in the palace. To this day the image of a sufferer is associated with the name Bronstein, unlike Tal – a cheerful, reckless playboy genius who didn't worry about anything and lived for today.

The writer Varlam Shalamov, recalling his childhood, wrote: 'I perceived any excellent reply on any subject as a personal insult, as offensive.' David Bronstein experienced similar feelings about the successes of his colleagues, but this became particularly obvious when Tal's star ascended. Although the relations between them were apparently completely friendly, Bronstein was jealous of Tal's successes, everyone noticed this envy, and Tal also had to have felt it.

Mikhail Botvinnik, pointing out the gaps in Tal's play, admitted that when the pure calculation phase of the game began he had no equals. Tigran Petrosian once remarked that personally he knew only one living genius – Tal. Leonid Stein gave the highest appraisal of Tal, and Mark Taimanov's initial scepticism about Misha was replaced by boundless admiration. The same feeling could always be sensed in Salo Flohr, who had seen a great deal in his long life. And only David Bronstein said that Tal didn't make a big impression on him: 'I have a very economical playing style. Tal played very intricately, piling up the variations, which he mainly thought up after the game. They're all unrealistic. Tal just twisted the position, instilling fear in his partners.'

> 'Even before Tal they called me a magician and a great maestro, a combinational genius!'

Kortchnoi recalls how, during the national championship in Moscow in 1957, Bronstein, observing Tal's sparkling play, smashing one opponent after another, said: 'Well, that Tal, he sacrifices all the time, sacrifices... He thinks he's the first person to play in that style. He should have looked at my games. Or the young Boleslavsky. He thinks no one played that way before him.'

Bronstein never managed to rid himself of this complex. At the end of his life he said, 'Now that I'm looking through my archive I'm surprised at how much was written about me in the newspapers. The headlines of the articles were no different. Even before Tal they called me a magician and a great maestro, a combinational genius!'

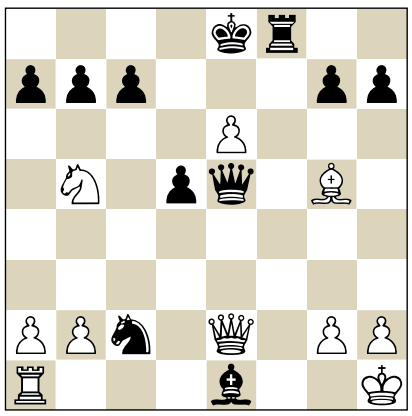
This was indeed the case: both Bronstein and Tal were combinational geniuses. Brilliant chess artists. But the most important thing that connected them was their wholehearted love of the game.

In the summer of 1988, in Moscow after a trip to the U.S., Mikhail Tal showed David Bronstein an 'entertaining game' that he'd played in a simul in California. Seeing the game, David Ionovich insisted that the winner wrote it down in his own handwriting: such pearls shouldn't vanish without a trace.

Here it is, a never-before-published game, carefully preserved for us by David Bronstein.

Mikhail Tal - N.N.
Los Angeles 1988

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d4 d6 5.dxe5 ♘xe4 6.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 7.♕d5+ ♗e6 8.♕xe4 d5 9.♕d3 ♗e7 10.0-0 ♕d7 11.♘c3 ♖af8 12.♖e1 ♔e8 13.♘g5? ♗c5 14.♘xe6 ♗xf2+ 15.♔h1 ♗xe1 16.♘xf8 ♖xf8 17.♗g5 ♘b4 18.♕e2 ♘xc2 19.e6 ♕d6 20.♘b5 ♕e5



21.h4 ♕g3 22.♖d1 ♖f2 23.♕xf2 ♗xf2 24.♖xd5 1–0 ■

Luke McShane

Too big for your board?

Some have tried to claim that chess is 99% tactics, a provocative comment, which is nonetheless about 95% true.

Have you ever looked at your chess set and noticed that the board looks rather... small? Or maybe the pieces a bit too big, like Alice in Wonderland stuck in the room after eating the cake? I don't mean that literally (well, probably not, unless your set is awfully misproportioned). You might be one of those types who doesn't even own a set, accustomed only to perfectly proportioned pieces on a computer screen. Even then, does it really look right?

It must be a majority of chess players who have, at some point, dabbled with another board game. I've played a bit of Shogi and Go, though not in any competitive sense. But playing those games did show me a thing or two about Chess. Shogi is played on a 9x9 board, and the bits seem to move rather like chess pieces on sedatives, so the party starts out slowly. But since captured pieces change sides instead of going to bed, the music inevitably gets louder until one of the kings (usually mine) succumbs to a beautifully surgical mating attack executed by minor pieces.

By comparison, the Go board is an agoraphobic's worst nightmare. Not only does battle take place on a 19x19 field, but the stones are individually pretty insignificant. For a patzer like me the initial stages of a game feel a bit like planting a garden – my stones are placed wherever they seem to look nicely spaced out. If my opponent were to pinch one while I were sipping my tea, I probably wouldn't notice. Later on the hedgerows seem to come alive and lock branches as the real fight begins, but it takes a lot of cultivation to get that far.

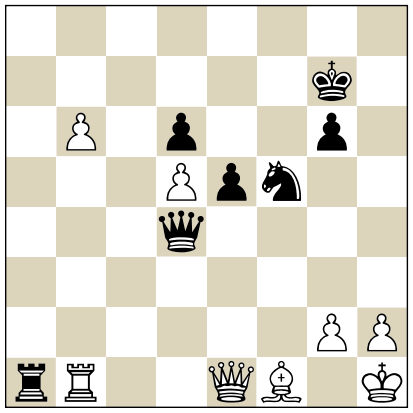
Returning to the chessboard, the pieces begin to look like giants. Bishops, rooks and queens regularly switch from corner to corner. Knights, in their own frenetic way, can be no less powerful, and pawns always have a chance at their own bite of Alice's cake. And yet chess is played on a board which is *smaller* than Shogi or Go? The 64 squares start to look like a china shop full of galloping bulls – it's quite amazing that the game could have any elegance at all. By comparison with some of the other classic board games, chess is extremely violent, and the fight begins from the very first move. Just ask any poor sucker who has just fallen for Scholar's Mate for the third time in a row. Sadly, I can't compare with Xiangqi (Chinese Chess) since I've never learnt the rules. I've heard that draughts is extremely precise and tactical to the thoroughly initiated, and I'm no expert, but perhaps that's because the board is even smaller (if you don't count the unused squares).[1]

Considering these factors it should come as no surprise to anyone that chess is a very tactical game. Some have tried to claim that chess is 99% tactics, a provocative comment, which is nonetheless about 95% true. Certainly, one can become a pretty decent player with only a primitive positional understanding. A few curmudgeonly souls might not like it that way, but they've probably hung a few too many pieces lately. Presumably, there is some level at which studying tactics provides diminishing returns, but I'm sure it's higher than most people think. That said, it has been a very long time since I really studied a book on tactics, and the main things that I rely on to keep my tactical brain

[1] Curiously, I noticed after writing this that David Bronstein once made a comparable comment in *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, in annotating his bishop sacrifice 26.♗g1xb6! against Panov from 1947. 'The dimensions of a chessboard are not large. Space is a very relative notion. You can play on a pocket chess set or on a demonstration board, but in either case you will have no more than 64 squares at your disposal. It goes without saying that if you want to win the battle you will need to control as much space as possible. To achieve this it is logical to use far-reaching pieces such as bishops.'

working are practical games, occasional blitz games and a few endgame studies.

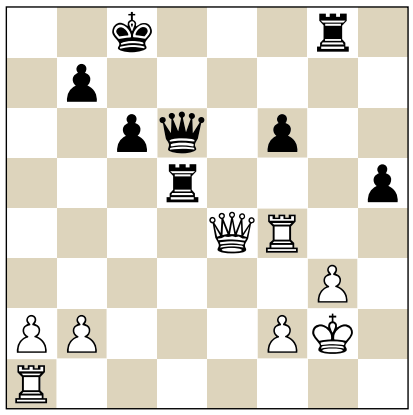
So I wasn't quite sure what to make of Yakov Neishtadt's ***Improve Your Chess Tactics*** (New In Chess 2011) which contains, altogether, more than 700 examples and exercises. It is a solid member of its genre, with the selection organised by tactical themes and pleasingly laid out in a readable mix of examples and exercises. The vast majority were new for me, but there were a decent number of 'old favourites' thrown in. In my opinion, those old favourites tend to be particularly elegant and memorable, so there's no reason not to include them just because they might be familiar to some readers. I'll pick one example, which also neatly demonstrates yet again just how small the chessboard is, as the rook darts around all four corners.



Karpov-Taimanov
Leningrad 1977

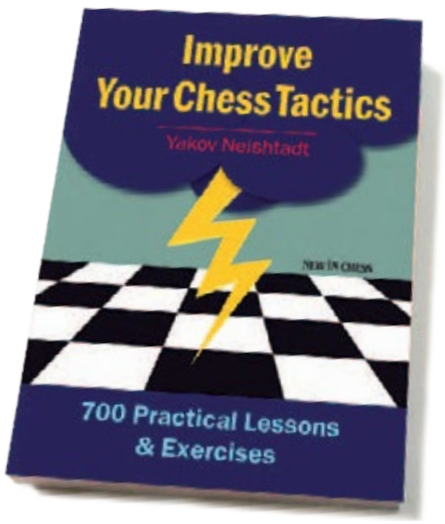
38...♘g3+!
White resigns, as 39.hxg3 ♖a8! is followed by mate on the h-file.

According to the blurb Neishtadt 'has selected those examples that have the biggest instructional value for club players'. Exactly what that level is, I find hard to judge, so instead I tried to reflect on whether there was some value for me in solving these exercises (which are certainly not difficult for titled players). I couldn't quite make my mind up about that, but take a look at what happened to me a couple of days later in the Icelandic league:



Thorgeirsson-McShane
Icelandic League 2011

28...♔b8
Outrating my young opponent by some 400 points, I was getting frustrated by the way the game was developing. My opponent's last move was 28.♔g2, but that piece had actually been on f3 since move 19, and I was sure I had missed some opportunity somewhere. Still, given the disparity in rating I thought I should have some practical hope of grinding out a win from this position, even if it is, in all honesty, a shade better for White. Not seeing a clear plan after a few minutes' contemplation, I decided to consolidate, and calmly pushed my king forward to c7. Somehow I was lucky enough to realise (before releasing the king, I should add!) that this would cost me a whole rook after ♕h7+, so I returned the king to c8 feeling, perhaps, like someone who has been hit by lightning and survived. I soon realised that 28...♔b8 was a move with fewer side-effects, and the game ended in a draw on move 65. A timely warning – no tactic is so trivial that you can't miss it.

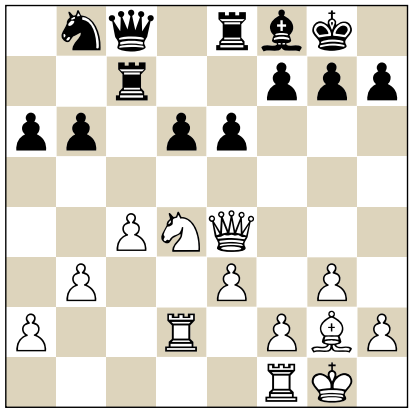


Yakov Neishtadt
Improve Your Chess Tactics
New In Chess 2011

It never hurts to rehearse basic tactics, but I suspect what this really shows is that there is more to being tactically sharp than solving puzzles. One has to be able to spot these things during a game, without a chapter heading by way of a clue, perhaps at the end of a long variation, while in time trouble and facing a confident opponent, when the result is critical to the match or tournament. Which is not to say that they were all mitigating factors on this occasion! I'm not sure what kind of tactical practice might have saved me from this near-miss, but walking into a 'help-fork' seems like a real outlier. Training raw tactical skill is rarely a waste of time, and for many players, solving tactical exercises of the type which appear in Neishtadt's book, and many other places, may be the best way to achieve that.

If any proof were needed that chess really is an elegant game, despite the tactical pitfalls lurking around every corner, then it can be found in the games of the Swedish Grandmaster Ulf Andersson. That is celebrated in the book ***Grandmaster Chess Strategy – What Amateurs Can Learn from Ulf Andersson's Positional Masterpieces***, written by Guido Kern and Jurgen Kaufeld. Former U.S. Champion Alex Yermolinsky is quoted on the cover as saying: 'Ulf was our cult figure, we'd give anything to be like him.' The authors themselves are a little more reserved in their introduction, writing: 'You will perhaps be wondering why we have written a manual on strategy that contains exclusively the games of Swedish grandmaster Ulf Andersson. The answer: as we analysed many games, we realised that the clear and purely positional playing style of Andersson is superbly well suited to the illustration of strategic themes'.

True enough, but it is clear that the authors themselves have fallen under the spell of Andersson's games, which is great news for those reading this book. As with all good books, real enthusiasm shines through the pages. Andersson's technique is legendary, particularly in apparently innocuous endgames, of which there are plenty of instructive examples. But there is a sprinkling of games with all kinds of themes – prophylaxis, the bishop pair, positional exchange and queen sacrifices, the art of defence and many more. What I particularly admire in this book is that the tone of the annotations remains in keeping with the subject matter throughout. The comments are light without being shallow and consistently emphasise the strategic ideas. In the most complex games, or at crucial moments, there is a more liberal sprinkling of variations, but they never become a burden. Naturally, many of the ideas in Andersson's games have become part of 'chess culture' – picked up and used by many modern players. Here is a brief example which included several ideas that were new to me, although I learnt from this book that similar ideas were also employed in Andersson-Seirawan from the same year, and Kasparov-Adams from 2004!



Andersson-Grünfeld
Lucerne Olympiad 1982

19.♕b1!

White prepares to double rooks on the d-file and now has a further positional threat in the line with a4, ♕a2, a5. If Black counters it with ...a5, then the result is a weak square on b5.

19...♘d7 20.♖fd1 ♘f6 21.a4 ♖c5 22.♖c2

Here White would like to play ♖dc1 then b4 and b5 to establish a very strong knight outpost on c6.

22...e5?!

22...d5 was Andersson-Langeweg, Wijk aan Zee 1981, which the authors also examine.

23.♘e2

Now White is threatening to dominate his opponent on the light squares with ♘c3-d5. So Black tries to stop this with 23...b5 and bases his decision on the idea that ♘c3 is not possible on account of the loss of a pawn.

23...b5 24.axb5 axb5 25.♘c3!!

The pawn sacrifice achieves for White a very dangerous passed pawn on the b-file and total control of the h1–a8 diagonal, which will provide massive support for the passed pawn.

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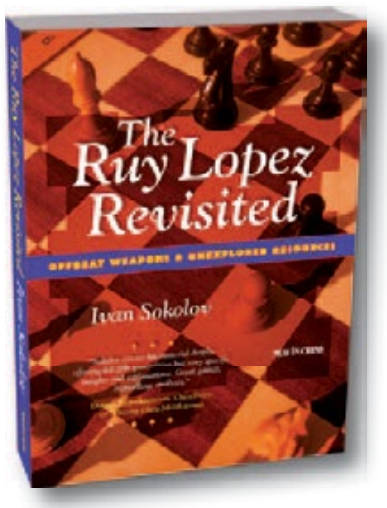

"Simply a great opening book, probably one of the best ever on the Spanish Opening."
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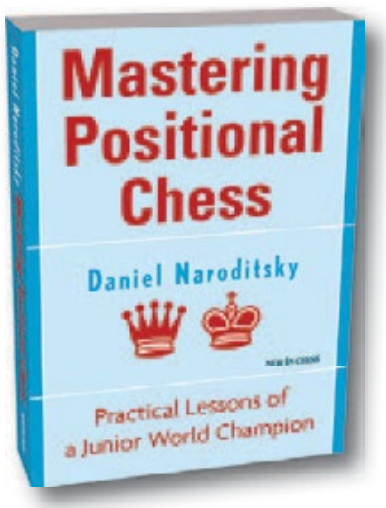
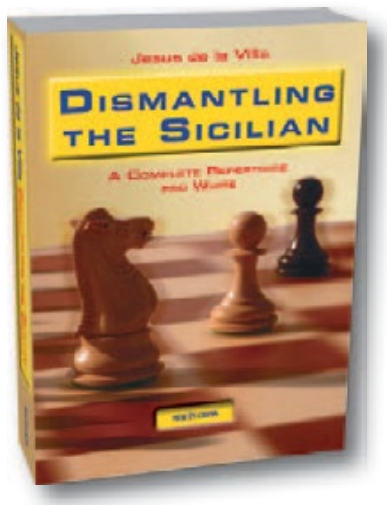
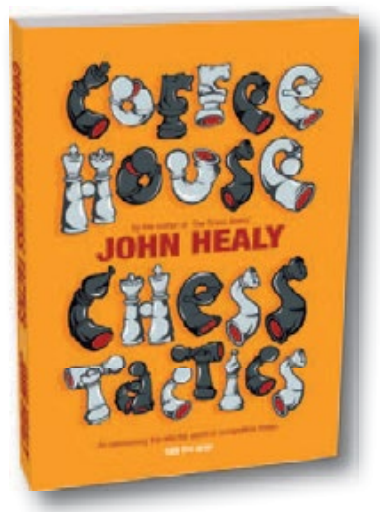


"Quite excellent: it is easy to understand, with a good collection of illustrative examples of how you can improve your positional understanding."
GM Simen Agdestein



"In fact, it would also constitute a good general grounding in the main variations of the Sicilian."
British Chess Magazine



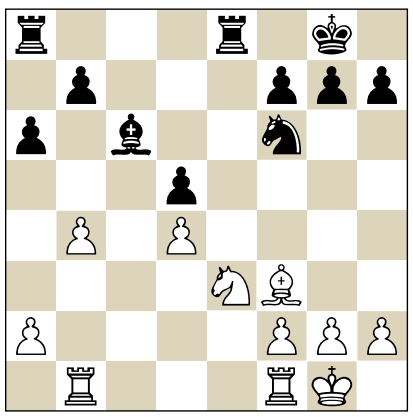
"It's the world of chess through eyes that offer a unique persective."
Robert Mulhern, Irish Post

Available at your local (chess)bookseller or at www.newinchess.com

If any proof were needed that chess really is an elegant game, despite the tactical pitfalls lurking around every corner, then it can be found in the games of the Swedish Grandmaster Ulf Andersson.

25...bxc4 26.b4 ♖c7 27.♘d5 ♘xd5 28.♗xd5 and White went on to win.

And a second one which caught my eye:



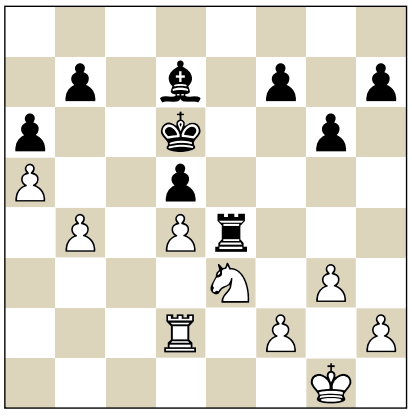
Gonzalez-Andersson
Rome 1985

It was this particular moment which made an impression on me, though Kaufeld & Kern actually begin their comments at move 28.

18...g6

With a 'bad' light-squared bishop many players would hardly consider this move, which places another pawn on a light square. But it does cover f5, allowing the king to move to d6. That frees up Black's minor pieces, and there are a few weaknesses in White's camp too. So simple!

19.g3 ♔f8 20.♖fc1 ♔e7 21.a4 ♔d6 22.♖a1 ♖ac8 23.a5 ♘e4 24.♖c2 ♗d7 25.♗xe4 ♖xe4 26.♖xc8 ♗xc8 27.♖d1 ♗d7 28.♖d2



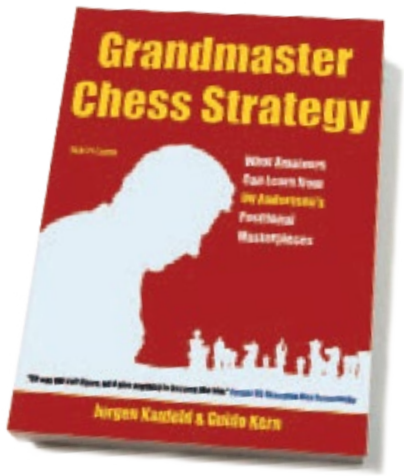
This is where the authors pick up the story. 'Black has a slight advantage here in view of his better king position and also the slightly better positioning of the rook. With the next move Black takes the initiative and threatens with ...f5-f4, either to drive away the knight or to destroy the pawn formation.'

To which I would add that this is slightly counter-intuitive for the same reasons as 18...g6, and no less instructive!

28...f5! and Black went on to win.

Inspiring stuff, and it makes me wish that I could play chess that way too. Tactics might be a form of magic, but making them vanish before our eyes begins to look like the ultimate form of wizardry. Except, have the tactics really vanished altogether? 28...f5! is a strong move because it is both surprising and opportunist – it wouldn't work with a slightly different configuration on the white kingside. In the Andersson-Grünfeld example, 25.♘c3!! is a pawn sacrifice for positional compensation, but it's still tactical in the sense that its success depends on the exact features of the position. Neither move was written in the stars, and both call for the eye of a tactician, though perhaps not the soul. Indeed, below the surface of all these positional masterpieces is a constant trickle of tactics, and sometimes a lot more than a trickle. The stakes might seem lower – a pawn weakness here, a bad bishop there, but those constitute the currency of these structures which Andersson so often favours, and how games are won and lost. Moreover, Andersson was rated fourth in the world in the early 1980s, which is not a level one achieves on positional flair alone. Kaufeld & Kern include quite a number of Andersson's much sharper games, which help to provide a more rounded impression, even though they are not the main thrust of the book.

Grandmaster Chess Strategy is warmly recommended. It's the kind of book to get out a real chess set for, with real, properly proportioned chess pieces. It won't stop you blundering a rook, but it might open up some new perspectives, especially in a die-hard tactician. And even if you do hang a rook, your pawn structure will thank you. I'm reminded of a half-remembered quote by an old English player called Henry



Jurgen Kaufeld & Guido Kern
Grandmaster Chess Strategy
New In Chess 2011

Bird. About Steinitz, it seems he had this to say: 'Place the contents of the chess box in a hat, shake them up vigorously, pour them on the board from a height of two feet, and you get the style of Steinitz.' I'm no Steinitz expert, so unless it was intended as an insult the meaning is lost on me, but it certainly sounds like the opposite of the style of Andersson. ■

Doha

Halfway through the Doha Grand Prix the dream of top-seed Humpy Koneru looked about to be shattered. Her chances to claim first place were evaporating and nothing less than a miracle was needed to keep her hopes alive. The finish of the Indian ace was breathtaking. First she defeated the early leader Elena Danielian. Next, in a highly dramatic last round she ground down former champion Zhu Chen with the black pieces. With this win Humpy Koneru finished second in the GP behind World Champion Hou Yifan, which gives her the right to challenge her Chinese rival for the world title later this year. In the notes to these two crucial games the challenger makes you relive some of the tensest moments in her young and prospering career.

NOTES BY
Humpy Koneru

SL 1.5 – D30
Humpy Koneru
Elena Danielian
Doha 2011 (8)

I very much wanted to win this game, since at this point I had only 4½ points out of 7 rounds. But I understood that it wouldn't be easy, since my opponent had been doing extremely well, with 6½ points in the first 7 rounds!!

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6

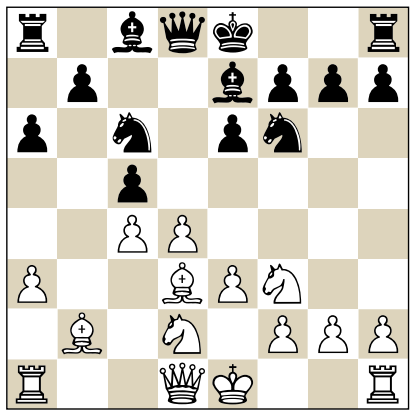
During our earlier encounters I played three games with white and interestingly, for every game she shifted to a different opening ☺.

3.e3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 e6 5.♘bd2 c5 6.b3 I suppose this came as a surprise to Danielian.

6...♘c6 7.♗b2 a6 8.a3

I opted for this move to avoid the following line: 8.♗d3 dxc4 9.bxc4 cxd4 10.exd4 ♗c5 11.♘b3 ♗b4+ 12.♘fd2 a5 13.a4 e5 14.d5 ♘xd5 15.cxd5 ♕xd5 16.♗e2 ♕xg2 17.♗f3 ♕g6, although White won in Iotov-Baghdasaryan, Kalamaria 2010.

8...dxc4 9.bxc4 ♗e7 10.♗d3



10...0-0

She played this instantly and I was quite happy when I saw this move on the board.

I was worried about 10...cxd4 11.exd4 ♘xd4! 12.♘xd4 e5 13.0-0 exd4 14.♘b3 0-0 15.♘xd4, and Black has obtained equality from the opening.

11.0-0 b6

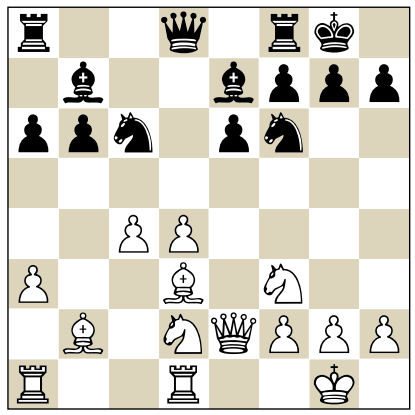
11...cxd4 12.exd4 ♘xd4?? doesn't work anymore, because of 13.♘xd4 e5 14.♘f5, and White wins.

12.♕e2 ♗b7 13.♖fd1 cxd4

I would prefer 13...♕c7, to maintain the tension in the centre. Furthermore, after the exchange in the centre the white knight gets a key square at e3.

14.exd4

A typical hanging pawns structure.

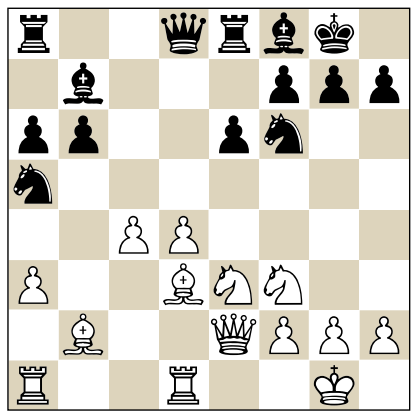


14...♖e8 15.♘f1 ♗f8

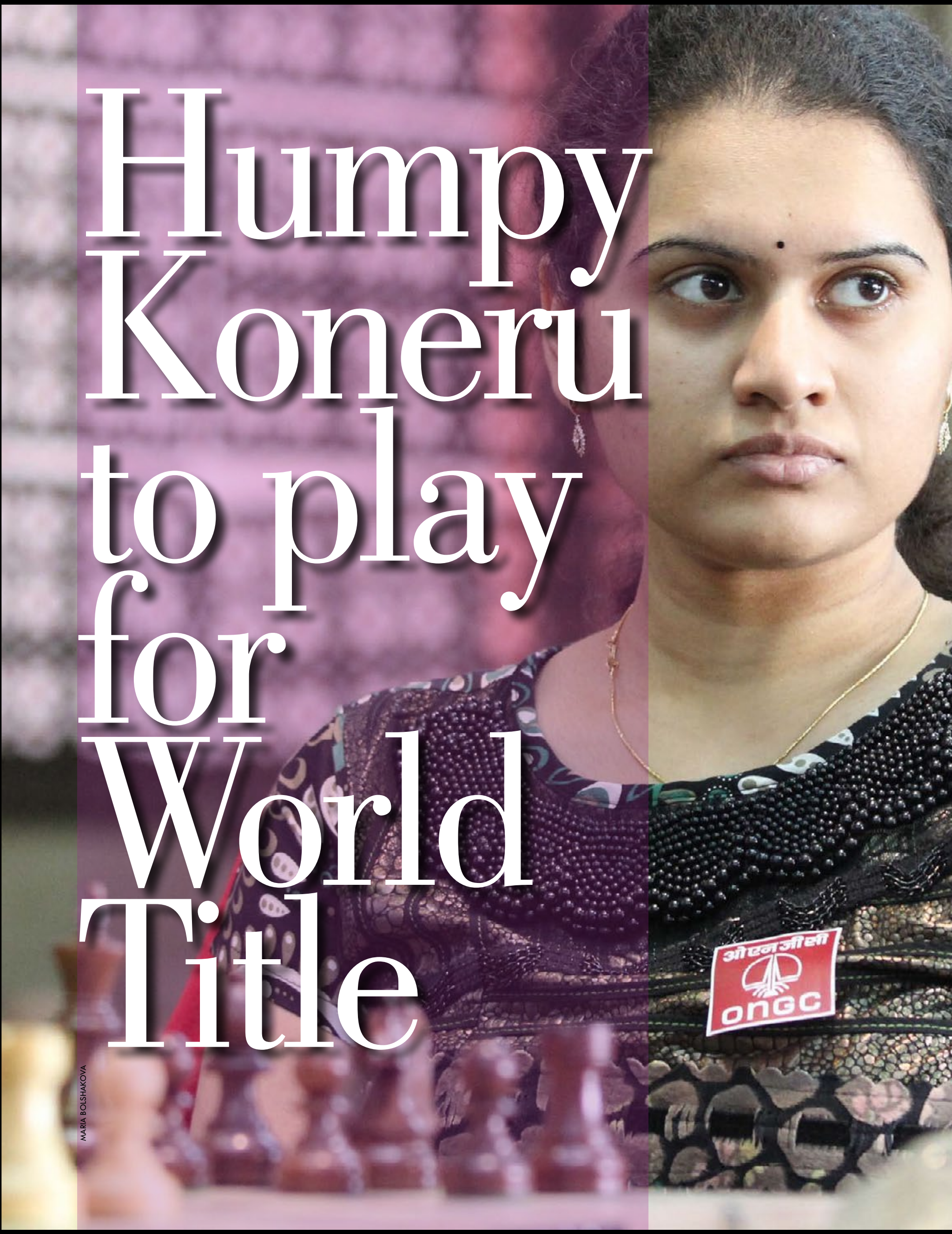
15...♘h5 is not available because of 16.d5 exd5 17.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 18.♖xd5, winning back the piece with an attack.

16.♘e3 All the white pieces are placed on the best squares.

16...♘a5 I was expecting 16...g6, when after 17.♖ab1 ♗g7 18.♗c3 the b6-square is a permanent weakness.

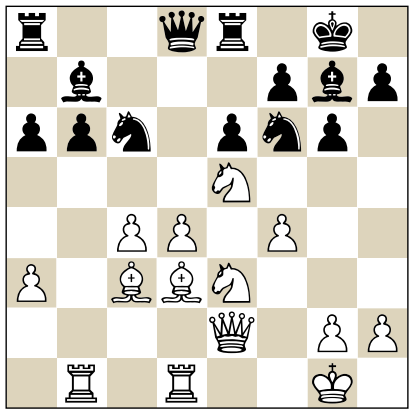


Humpy Koneru to play for World Title

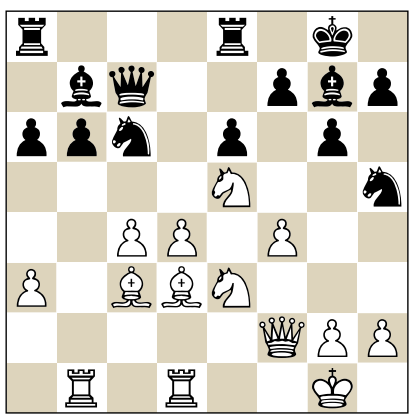


MARIA BOLSHAKOVA

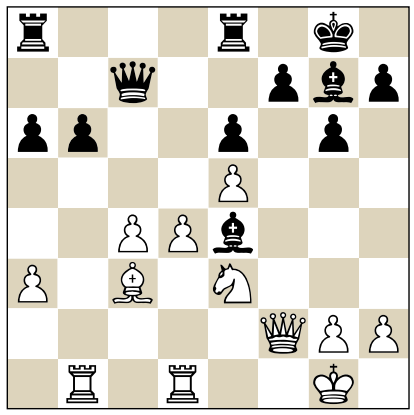
17.♘e5
17.♗c3 seems to be more accurate. However, after 17...♘h5 I have to play 18.g3. During the game I preferred not to weaken the light-squared diagonal, but after 18...♘f6 19.♗xa5 bxa5 20.c5 ♕c7 21.♘c4 White has a clear advantage, according to the engines.
17...g6 18.♖ab1 ♗g7
White has an edge after 18...♘h5 19.♕c2 ♘f4 20.♗e4.
19.♗c3 ♘c6 20.f4



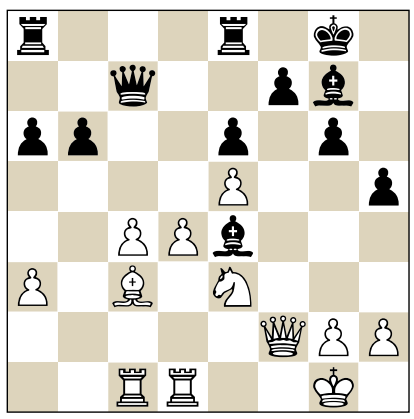
20...♘h5
A natural riposte, which only fails because of White's strong centre and space advantage. The move doesn't contain any concrete plan. Black should have tried to maintain the position with 20...♖b8 21.♗c2 ♕c7 22.a4 ♖ed8 23.♖b3.
21.♕f2 ♕c7
Bad is 21...♗h6 22.♗e4 ♕c7 23.d5 ♘xe5 24.♗xe5, and White is winning.



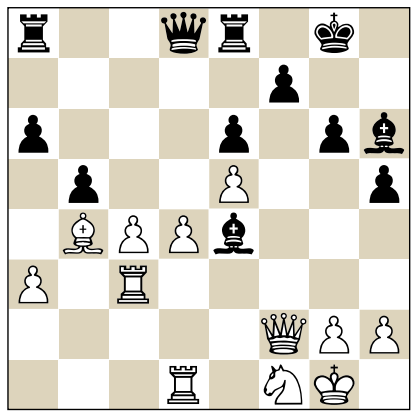
22.♗e2
More accurate would be 22.c5! bxc5 23.dxc5 ♘xe5 24.fxe5 ♗h6 25.♘c4, with an edge.
22...♘f6 23.♗f3 ♘xe5 24.fxe5
In case of 24.♗xb7 ♘xc4 25.♗xa8 ♘xe3 26.♕xe3 ♖xa8 Black certainly has compensation. It is unclear whether White can claim anything more.
24...♘e4 25.♗xe4 ♗xe4



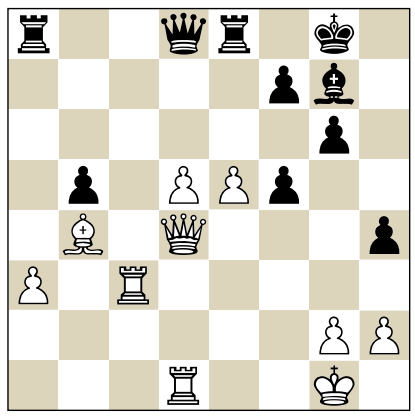
It is time to decide on the rook placement. Choosing between 26.♖b3 and 26.♖bc1, I thought it was better to avoid ...b5, which would disturb my pawn structure.
26.♖bc1 h5 Black threatens to activate her bishop from h6.



27.♗b4
Here I calculated a long line over the board, but couldn't find any advantage. I strongly felt that there should be some initiative in the endgame, but to my amazement the evaluation was equal, even with the help of an engine: 27.♕f4 f5 28.d5 exd5 29.cxd5 ♗xe5 30.♗xe5 ♕xe5 31.♕xe5 ♖xe5 32.♘c4 ♖e7 33.♘xb6 ♖d8 34.d6 ♖e6 35.d7 ♔f7 36.♘a4 ♗c6 37.♘c5 ♖e2 38.♖d6 ♗a8 39.♔f1 ♖a2! 40.♖e1 ♗xg2+ 41.♔g1 ♗e4 42.h4 ♖g2+ 43.♔f1 ♖g4 44.♖ed1 ♖f4+ 45.♔e1 ♗a8 46.♘d3 ♖e4+ 47.♔f2 ♖e6, with equality.
27...♗h6 28.♖c3 ♕d8
On 28...♖ad8 White has 29.♘f1! ♗a8 30.♘d2 ♕c6 31.♗d6 ♖d7 32.♖b1 ♖ed8 33.c5 bxc5 34.dxc5 ♕d5 35.♘c4, with a slight advantage.
29.♘f1 b5
The most ambitious move. Danielian had missed the ♘g3, ♘xh5 sacrifice. The accurate way to play is 29...♖a7 30.♗d6 ♖d7 31.♘d2 ♗b7 32.c5, with a slight edge for White.



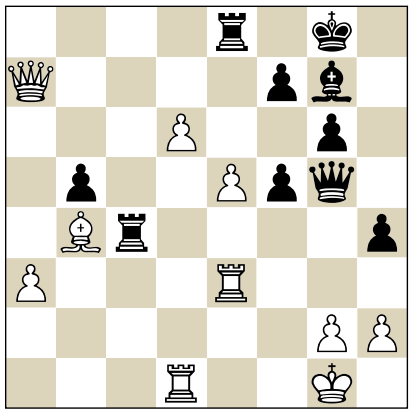
30.♘g3 ♗f5
30...♗b7?? fails to 31.♘xh5 gxh5 32.♖g3+ ♗g7 33.♕f4, and White wins.
31.cxb5 axb5 32.d5! h4 33.♘xf5 exf5 My opponent had less than three minutes left, and without much thought I decided to place my pieces on the best possible squares.
34.♕d4 ♗g7



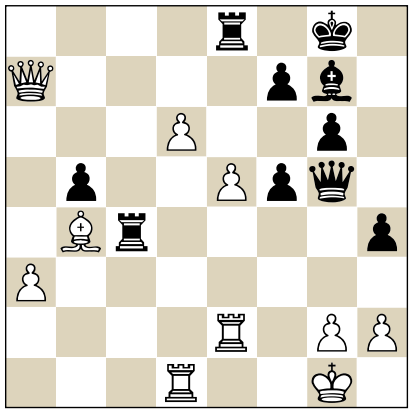
Doha Grand Prix 2011

1	Humpy Koneru	IGM	IND	2607	8
2	Elina Danielian	IGM	ARM	2454	8
3	Marie Sebag	IGM	FRA	2489	7
4	Pia Cramling	IGM	SWE	2516	5½
5	Maia Chiburdanidze	IGM	GEO	2502	5½
6	Nana Dzagnidze	IGM	GEO	2550	5½
7	Xu Yuhua	IGM	CHN	2484	5
8	Batkhuyag Munguntuul	IM	MGL	2410	5
9	Lilit Mkrtchian	IM	ARM	2475	4½
10	Martha Fierro Baquero	IM	ECU	2363	4½
11	Antoaneta Stefanova	IGM	BUL	2546	4
12	Zhu Chen	IGM	QAT	2495	3½

35.♖e3 Obviously, 35.♖e1! is better.
35...♖c8 36.d6 ♖c4
I guess she had overlooked 36...♕d7 37.♖de1 ♖c4 38.♕d5 ♖e6 39.♖c3 ♖xc3 40.♗xc3, with a decisive advantage for White.
37.♕a7 ♕g5



38.♖e2!
Here I spent around seven minutes on the text-move, trying to calculate the main options, but that left me with only four minutes on the clock. It is a natural move and the best part of it is that it prepares the threat of d7, ♗a5.

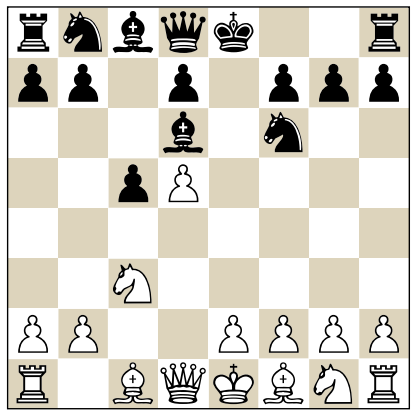


38...♗xe5??
A terrible blunder in time-trouble. The only chance to stay in the game was 38...h3!! 39.♕f2 ♖c1 40.♖d2 ♖xd1+ 41.♖xd1 ♗xe5 42.d7 ♖d8 43.♗a5 ♕g4 44.♖d2 ♕c4 45.gxh3 ♕c1+ 46.♕f1 ♕c5+ 47.♕f2 ♕c1+, with a perpetual.
39.♖xe5
39.d7 was a more convincing win.
39...♖xe5 40.d7 ♖d5
Or 40...♖c1 41.d8♕+ ♕xd8 42.♖xc1 h3 43.♗a5 ♕d5 44.♕f2 ♖e3 45.gxh3 ♖xh3 46.♕f4, with a winning advantage.
41.♕a8+ ♔h7 42.♕xd5
And Black resigned.

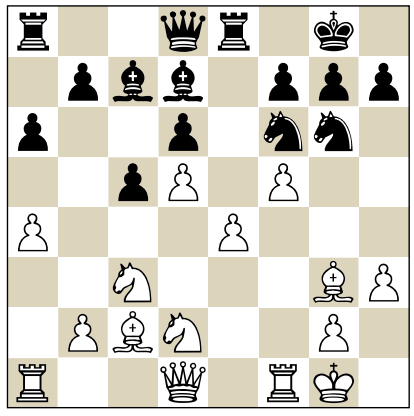
NOTES BY
Humpy Koneru

BI 4.4 – A60
Zhu Chen
Humpy Koneru
Doha 2011 (11)

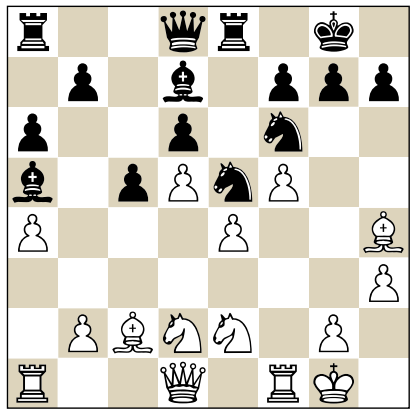
After the penultimate round Elena Danielian was leading the tournament with 7½ points, while Marie Sebag and myself were at 7 points. It was the tensest situation I have ever faced. It was not about winning the tournament, but it would determine the challenger for the world title match. I was in a must-win situation. Another important detail was that if Sebag won against Munguntuul, I would lose the opportunity of qualifying for the title match. Danielian was facing Stefanova and I was quite confident before that game that it would end up in a draw. If things didn't turn out on my side, Nana Dzagnidze would be the challenger.
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 ♗d6



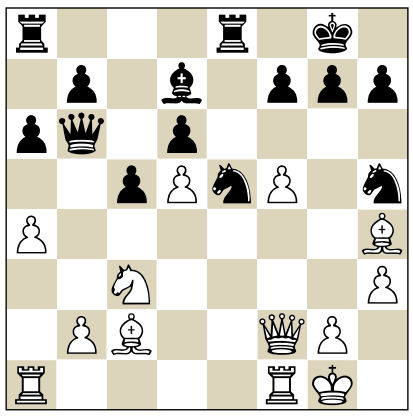
This was a big surprise for my opponent. In recent times no one has tried this kind of position against her.
6.♘f3 ♗c7 7.e4 d6 8.h3 0-0 9.♗d3 She has chosen the most common set-up.
9...a6 10.a4 ♖e8 11.0-0 ♘bd7 12.♗f4 ♘f8 13.♘d2 ♘g6 14.♗g3 ♘e5 15.♗c2
This is out of my notes. On an earlier occasion she played 15.♗e2 ♗d7 16.♕c2 ♖b8 17.♖fc1 b5 18.axb5 axb5 19.b4 c4 20.♘f3 ♗b6 21.♖a6 ♗c8 22.♖a2 ♕d7 23.♕d2 ♘xf3+ 24.♗xf3 ♗b7 25.♗h4 ♗d8 26.♕f4 h6 27.♗g3 1-0, Zhu Chen-Nikolaidis, Athens 2006.
15...♗d7 16.f4 ♘g6 17.f5



She played this after a long think. In the meantime I was roaming around the important boards.
17...♘e5 18.♗h4 ♗a5!
18...b5 19.axb5 axb5 20.♖xa8 ♕xa8 21.♗xf6 gxf6 was also playable, but I hesitated to play this kind of position. I was aiming for more.
19.♘e2
At this moment, as expected, Danielian vs. Stefanova ended in a draw and Munguntuul had a good position.



19...♗xd2? I know this was not the best move available, but I couldn't resist the temptation.
The normal way to continue was 19...c4 20.♔h1 ♕e7 21.♘g3 ♕f8 22.♗xf6 gxf6, and then the queen goes to h6.
20.♕xd2 ♘xe4 21.♕f4 ♘f6 22.♘c3 ♘h5 23.♕f2 ♕b6
The critical position has arisen. Although Black has won a pawn, the knight on h5 is in trouble. I felt White was better and that a few strategic moves would wrap up Black's game. White has a lot of choices. Here she spent 30 minutes and came up with:



24.♖a3?

Also weak was 24.g4? ♘f4 25.♕xf4 ♕xb2 26.♘e4 ♕xc2 27.♘f6+, when at first sight it looks as if White is going to finish the game in style. But if Black simply rejects the piece, things will be troublesome for White: 27...♔h8 28.♘xe8 ♖xe8 29.f6 g6 30.♕h6 ♖g8.

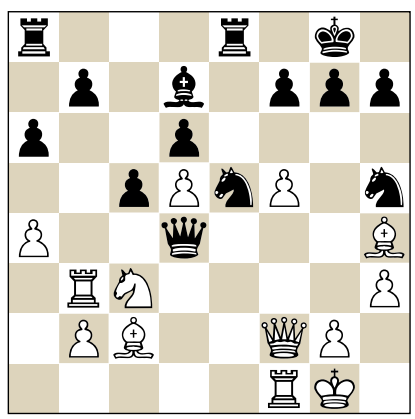
A good positional move was 24.♘e4!!, which leads to a winning advantage. Zhu mentioned this move to me before the closing ceremony. Play might continue 24...♕xb2 25.♘xd6 ♘f4 26.♘xe8 ♖xe8 27.♖fe1 ♘xd5 28.♖ad1 ♗c6 29.♕xc5, and Black faces a tough task.

Finally, White would have kept a slight advantage after 24.f6 g6 25.♘e4 ♗f5 26.g4 ♗xe4 27.♗xe4 ♘xg4 28.hxg4 ♖xe4 29.gxh5 ♕b3.

24...♕b4! 25.♖b3 After this move I gained more confidence.

Better was 25.♘e4 ♕xb2 26.♖b3 ♕d4 27.♕xd4 cxd4 28.♖xb7 ♖eb8 29.♘xd6 d3 30.♗b3 ♖xb7 31.♘xb7 ♖c8, with equal chances.

25...♕d4 Now the queen is centralized on a strong square.

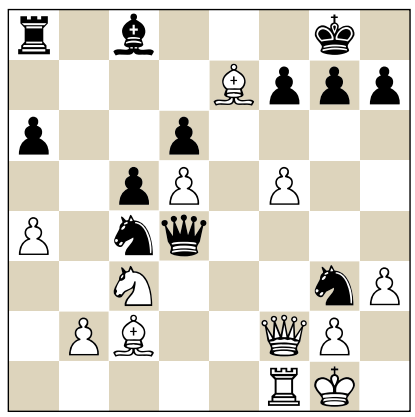


26.♖b6?

This is a mistake, of course. She is making too many moves with the rook. Now Black has the initiative.

She could still have maintained equality with 26.♖xb7 (true, also a rook move) 26...♖ab8 27.♖xb8 ♖xb8 28.♘e4 ♘f4 29.♗g3 ♖xb2 30.♗xf4 ♖xc2 31.♕xd4 cxd4.

26...♘c4 27.♖xb7 ♗c8 28.♖e7 ♖xe7 29.♗xe7 ♘g3

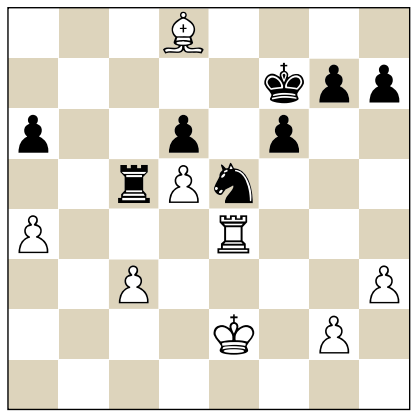


This is a clearly better position for Black.

30.♕xd4 cxd4 31.♖f3 ♗xf5 32.♗xf5 ♘xf5 33.♖xf5 dxc3 34.bxc3 f6! 35.♖f4 ♖c8 36.♖e4 ♖c5

36...♔f7 was also strong enough to convert the position into a win: 37.♗d8 ♘e5 38.♗a5 ♖c5.

37.♔f2 ♔f7 38.♗d8 ♘e5 39.♔e2

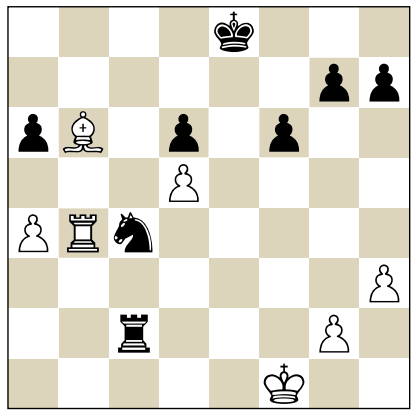


39...♔e8

39...♖xc3 would have been normal. In the first half of the tournament I had spoiled many winning positions. So here I became overprotective, trying to stop the rook from coming in over the b-file.

After 39...♖xc3 play may continue: 40.♖b4 ♖c2+ 41.♔d1 ♖xg2 42.♖b7+ ♔g6 43.♖a7 ♘c4 44.♖xa6 ♔f5 45.♖c6 ♘e3+ 46.♔e1 ♔e5 and Black wins.

40.♗b6 ♖xc3 41.♖b4 ♖c2+ 42.♔f1 ♘c4



Placing the knight on the key square.

43.♔g1

Moving the king to avoid a knight check, as after 43.♗f2 a5 44.♖b7 ♔f8 45.♖a7 (45.♖c7 is impossible due to 45...♘d2+) 45...♖a2 Black is winning.

43...♔f7 44.♗f2 ♔g6 45.g4 a5 46.♖b7 ♖a2 47.h4 ♖xa4 48.h5+ ♔h6 49.♖c7 ♘e5

White resigned.

After the win I immediately rushed to the press room waiting for the game Munguntuul-Sebag to end. After 10 minutes Munguntuul won and I qualified to play the title match against Hou Yifan! ■

Grand Prix final standings

1	Hou Yifan	410
2	Koneru Humpy	398.3
3	Nana Dzagnidze	390
4	Tatiana Kosintseva	383.3
5	Elina Danielian	358.3
6	Zhao Xue	293.3
7	Xu Yuhua	275
8	Marie Sebag	270
9	Antoaneta Stefanova	268.3
10	Pia Cramling	245
11	Lilit Mkrtchian	213.3
12	Maia Chiburdanidze	195
13	Batkhuyag Munguntuul	175
14	Shen Yang	160
15	Zhu Chen	145
16	Martha Fierro	120
17	Kovanova Baira	100
18	Ju Wenjun	80
19	Betul Cemre Yildiz	40
20	Zeinab Mamedyarova	25

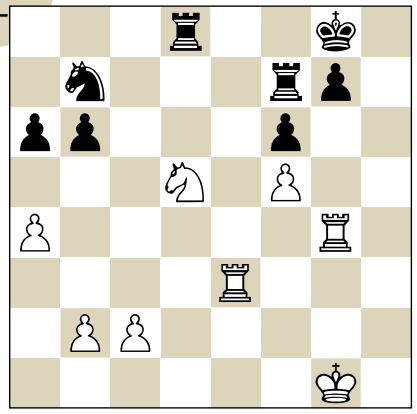
After Istanbul 2009, Nanjing 2009, Nalchik 2010, Jermuk 2010, Ulaanbaatar 2010, Doha 2011

Charles Hertan

Forcing Moves

Solutions of page 67

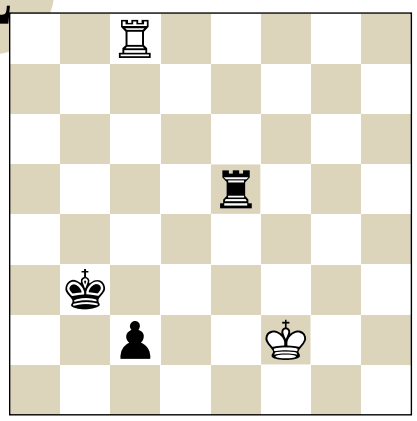
1



DeFirmian-Browne
Oak Brook 1996

White won this spare position with the beautiful deflection motif: **1.♘e7+ ♔f8 2.♘g6+ ♔g8 3.♖d4!!** Not 3. ♖h3? ♖fd7!. **3...♖b8?** 3...♖xd4? 4. ♖e8+ mates. **4.♖h3 1-0** I've admired this unusual blow for years but only noticed Browne's oversight on the final edit. **3...♖ff8!** With a spirited resistance – but objectively Black's chances are slim to nil after **4.♖b4!**

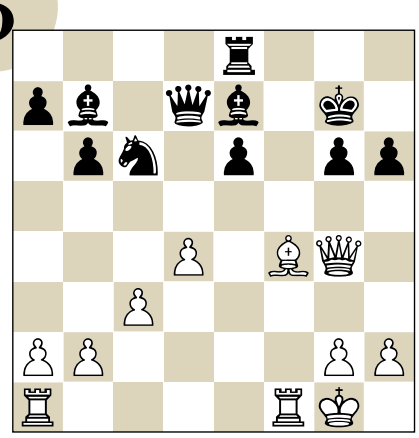
2



Tarrasch-Weiss
Frankfurt 1887

The endgame preparation of 19th century masters is unclear, but at minimum they often reinvented the wheel. 'Building a bridge' is shorthand for the ubiquitous Lucena position, but this can be prevented. Every club player knows the main line 1.♖b8+ ♔c4! 2.♖c8+ ♖c5, but what if White waits with 1.♖c7? Then 1...♖e4! with a closer bridge. This begs a question: can White stop the threat with Tarrasch's **1.♔f3?** Yes, but then comes the instructive motif which I call 'the walkaway': **1... ♖e1! 2.♖b8+ ♔a4!** and the black king zigzags toward the rook until checks expire and the pawn promotes.

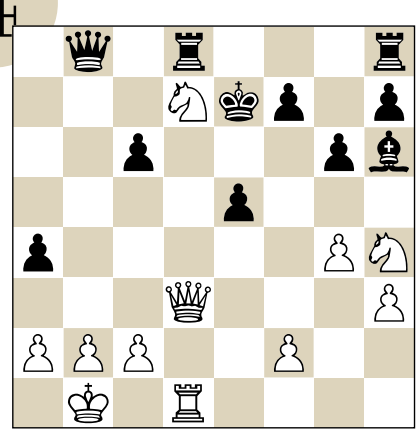
3



Shredder-Gulko
USA 2002

The microchip maestro lived up to its name: **1.♗xh6+! ♔xh6** 1...♔h8 2.♖f7 ♖g8 3.♕h3. **2.♕h3+ ♔g7** 2...♔g5 3.g3! and ♕h4 mate. **3.♖f7+! 1-0** 3...♔xf7 4.♕h7+ mates shortly. Giving a ♖ for the ♕ check on h7 is mere child's play for today's elite machines.

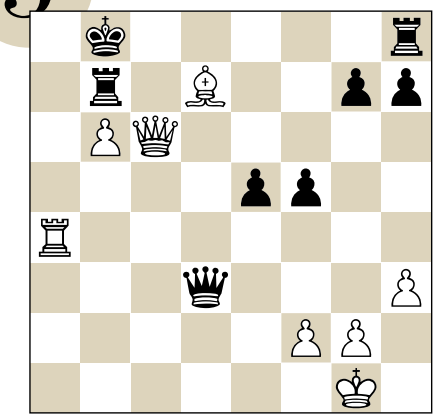
4



Ilescas-Miles
Linares 1995

A crisp mating sequence caps White's energetic attack: **1.♘f5+! gxf5** 1...♔e8 2.♘f6+. **2.♕a3+ ♔e6** 2...♔e8 3.♘f6 mate. **3.gxf5+ ♔xf5 4.♕f3+ 1-0** 4...♗g5 5.♕g4+ ♔e4 6.♘f6 mate; 4...♔g6 5.♖g1+ ♗g5 6.♕f6+.

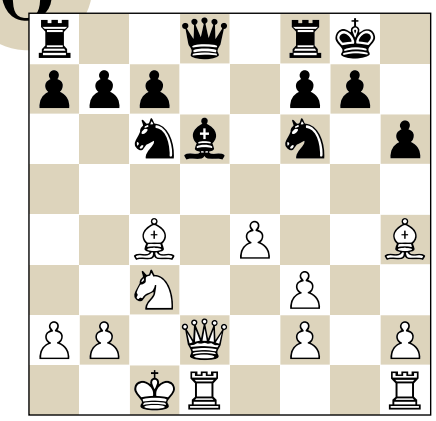
5



Niedermann-Zucks

The WQ performs geometric wonders with **1.♗c8!! ♖xc8** 1...♕b1+ 2.♔h2 ♕xb6 3.♗xb7 ♕xb7 4.♕d6+ ♕c7 5.♖a8+. **2.♖a8+! ♔xa8 3.♕xc8+ ♖b8 4.♕c6+! ♖b7 5.♕a4+ ♔b8 6.♕e8+** And mate. I can't locate the time and place of this unique combo; perhaps a knowing reader can help?

6



Miles-Deep Thought
Long Beach 1989

Can you recall a more unnatural winning move than Deep Thought's **1... ♘xe4 2.♗xd8 ♘xd2 3.♗xc7** Seems to hold, BUT... **3...♗xh2!! 4.♗xh2** 4. ♖xd2 ♗xc7 5.♖d7 ♗f4+ 6.♔c2 ♘e5. **4...♘xc4 5.♖d7 b6** With a good extra pawn? When humans start finding such 'computer moves', should we celebrate, or run for cover? Incidentally, the silicon companion Rybka tries a sharper defense: 2.♕xh6! gxh6 3.♗xd8 ♘xf2 4.♖hg1+ ♔h7 5.♗f6 ♖g8 6.♖df1 ♖xg1 7.♖xg1 ♖g8∓. Absurd – but evidently true 'higher geometry'!

Monte Carlo 1967

When in 1956 Prince Rainier III married famous Hollywood movie star Grace Kelly, it was universally acclaimed as the wedding of the year. But what will perhaps be of more interest to our readers is that the casino waiters raised enough money to present the happy couple with their own wedding gift – a chess set made of gold and silver! In 1967, a quarter of a century before Monte Carlo became the home of the Amber Tournament, a grandmaster tournament was held in the Principality that was won by 24-year-old Bobby Fischer. **Jimmy Adams** was there and shares his memories.

When Prince Rainier visited the tournament in Round 7 he had ample time to talk to Bobby Fischer, as the American's opponent Vasily Smyslov didn't turn up because of dental problems.

Although Monte Carlo is only one of seven districts in the Principality of Monaco, it is the richest, since it is where you will find the gaming houses – which provide 75 per cent of State revenue. Of course, Monaco is also famous for its annual Formula One Grand Prix, which is regarded as the most difficult circuit in the world and the greatest test of driving skill. English racing driver Graham Hill won five times here in the 1960s, but there was one Grand Prix that he didn't win – the Grand Prix d'Echecs!

It was a time of great change and Rainier did not want Monaco to be known only as a green felt playground and a racing track but also as a cultural centre. So he made efforts to enhance the Principality's reputation for entertainment, sport, art and music. In keeping with this trend, the Prince was approached by the French Chess Federation to consider adding a chess festival to Monaco's catalogue. Rainier responded enthusiastically with the proposal that he himself be President of the Organising Committee – after all, it was the 'royal' game.

As it happened, Raoul Bertolo, director of the magazine *Europe Echecs*, had already established a tradition of staging an annual chess festival in collaboration with the French Chess Federation. It started off as a Swiss system tournament, but in 1966, for the first time, all-play-all sections for the grandmasters and masters were introduced. Darga, Forintos and Matanovic had tied for first at Bordeaux 1964, Gereben won at Strasbourg 1965, Larsen topped Le Havre 1966, and now Bobby Fischer was to be invited to see what he could do at Monte

‘What Bobby wants, Bobby gets’

Carlo 1967. Rumour had it that Bobby received a rather special invitation, a letter written by Princess Grace.

More money than ever before was made available in order to fund a grandmaster tournament, two supporting international master all-play-all's, a 100-player Open and a junior invitational. The Prince anticipated that this would generate positive publicity – and his further sponsorship of two more chess festivals in 1968 and 1969 confirmed his satisfaction with the proceedings.

Monaco is one of the smallest countries in the world, and so, following the example of the polders in Holland, the Prince had undertaken a project to reclaim land from the Mediterranean. On this new terrain was created a sandy beach, a leafy park and the Hall du Centenaire, a spacious building designed for exhibitions and sporting events. In fact this venue had only been opened the previous year and celebrated the 100th anniversary of Monaco as an independent sovereign state. It was here that Rainier decided to hold the chess festival, which in itself equally marked a 100th anniversary – that of France's first great international tournament, Paris 1867.

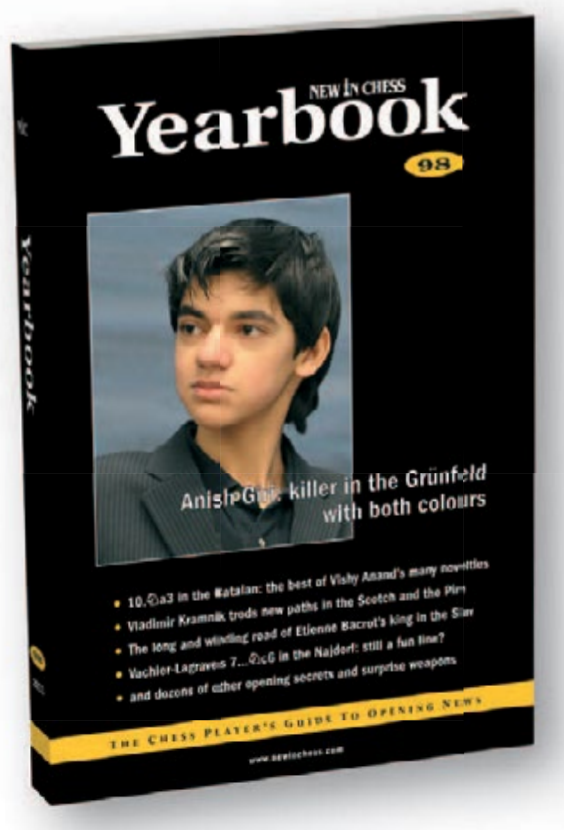
From the pages of chess history we might also add that from 1901-1904 four previous international tournaments had been held in Monte Carlo. In one of these, David Janowski promptly lost all his prize money in the casino!

For the 1967 grandmaster tournament the organisers had assembled an interesting assortment of players, which included several previous winners. In addition to Fischer, who had not played in an individual tournament outside the USA for five years, also competing was former world title holder Vasily Smyslov, and top class grandmasters Bent Larsen, Efim Geller, and Svetozar Gligoric. Completing the line-up were past junior world champion William Lombardy, future Hungarian champion Győzö Forintos, editor of the newly formed *Chess Informant* Alexander Matanovic, and two French champions, Guy Mazzoni and Volf Bergraser.

The reigning world champion, Tigran Petrosian, had originally also been invited, but he declined to take part. Three possible reasons were cited for this: (1) he wanted to prepare for a very strong tournament celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, coming up in May in Moscow; (2) he objected to Fischer getting a big appearance fee while he received nothing; and (3) he preferred to watch the European Ice Hockey Championship which was being held at the same time in Vienna!

Initially Petrosian was substituted by Yakov Estrin, a future world correspondence champion, but he, in turn, was replaced by Smyslov, after the Russians realised that Fischer was definitely going to play.

NEW IN CHESS Yearbook 98



With answers to urgent questions like:

- Why did Anish Giri play the Grünfeld Indian against Magnus Carlsen?
- Has Rustam Kasimdzhanov blown out White's candle in the Chebanenko Slav with 6.b3?
- Just how risky is Vladimir Kramnik's 4...a6 in the Pirc?
- How do Hungarians fare in the Hungarian Variation of the Grünfeld?
- Is Maxime Vachier-Lagrave's 7...♘c6 in the Najdorf still fun for Black?
- What are Viktor Moskalenko's occultest ideas in the French?
- Why don't they play the North Sea Defence in Wijk aan Zee?
- Is 3...d4 a good option against the Short Variation of the Caro-Kann?
- Can we trust opening books on 8.♗f7 in the Alapin Sicilian?
- How should White deal with 7...♘h6 in the Advance French?
- Is the Halloween Gambit sound?
- Where should White's king go in the piece sac variation of the Krause Slav?
- What is the 'Grünfeld Attack'?
- How does Sergey Tiviakov find creativity in the Queen's Indian?
- What is the Zukertort System – and how good is it?

and many more!

For the contents of Yearbook 98 see www.newinchess.com/latestYB

The Chess Player's Guide to Opening News

William Lombardy and Bobby Fischer shake hands at the start of their first-round game. Fischer won. When they shook hands again, he quipped: 'No hard feelings!'

German grandmasters Klaus Darga and Wolfgang Unzicker had also earlier accepted invitations but each had to withdraw due to pressure of work – Darga, a couple of weeks before and Unzicker, with only two days notice. The organisers sought a late replacement for Darga in Florin Gheorghiu, who had sensationally defeated Fischer at the previous year's Olympiad in Havana. The Romanian accepted but unfortunately was having difficulties obtaining an exit visa and had not arrived by the time of the opening ceremony. Nevertheless, in the hope that he would eventually turn up, the drawing of lots was carried out on the basis of 12 players, even though Unzicker's place was to remain unfilled. In this way everyone would get an extra free day, which was most welcome since the announced schedule had envisaged 11 rounds in 12 days. As it turned out, Gheorghiu did not get his visa and so the tournament was reduced to ten players – with yet another extra rest day.

Moreover, the tournament organisers had to cope with further complications, which Larsen described in his own witty way: 'Fischer, as is well known, does not play on the Sabbath from Friday 6 p.m. to Saturday 6 p.m. His game with Smyslov also had to be rescheduled because the Russian was afflicted with a terrible toothache, necessitating an extraction at the dental surgery. Then Bergraser suddenly fell ill with pneumonia and was taken by ambulance to the hospital – thereby forfeiting his last four games. In the meantime, other competitors with such trifles as headache, a chill or indigestion, had to suffer in silence.'

They were playing chess a few yards from the legendary Bobby Fischer!

Interestingly, later, in *Larsen's Selected Games of Chess 1948-69*, he added: 'My play was good one day and bad the next, maybe because of stomach trouble. The stomach is an essential part of a chess master; it must be able to adjust to many changes of diet, and mine used to be very good in this respect. Monaco was the exception.'

The chess festival ran through the Easter holiday, from March 24 until April 4, and the Hall had to be quickly cleared, reorganised and refurbished because the French Boxing Championships had just taken place there. A carpet was laid, temporary partitions set up to separate the playing area from the bar and analysis room, and individual chairs and tables, complete with tablecloths, new chess sets, clocks, and specially designed score books, put in place for all competitors of all strengths. Plenty of space was provided to walk around and in fact some chess enthusiasts came from Paris, and even Belgium, Germany, England and the USA, just to watch the games. The walls were decorated with green palms and an office was established for the arbiters and organisers, who produced daily bulletins of results and games. All of which made for perfect playing conditions whilst enabling the amateurs to draw inspiration from the grandmasters, who remained in full view throughout the sessions in a roped off area in the middle of the hall. Just imagine ... they were playing chess a few yards from the legendary Bobby Fischer!

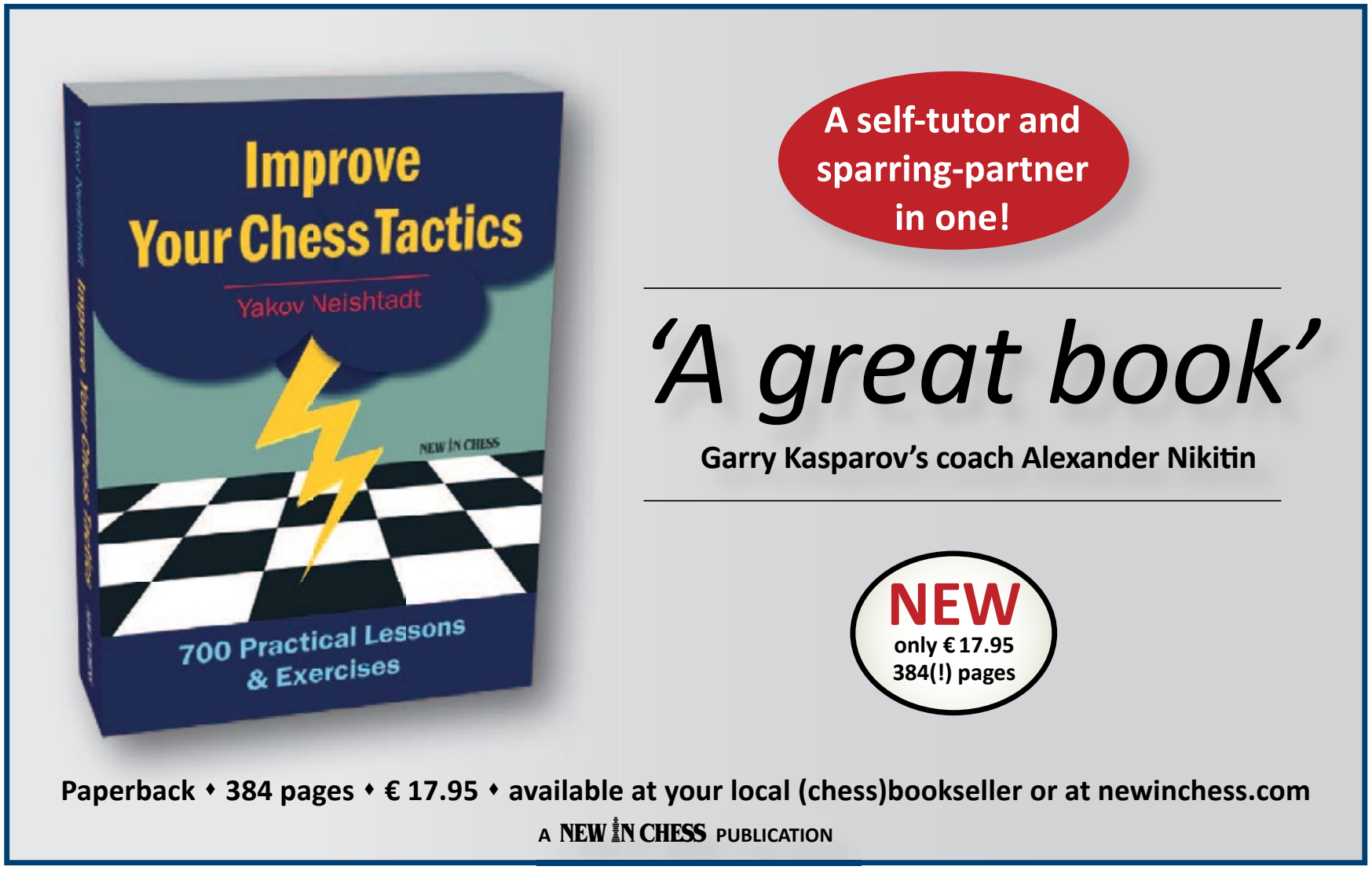
At the opening ceremony, the organisers, les Amis d'Europe Echecs, extended their thanks to the Prince and Princess, the Association pour les Intérêts de Monaco et de la Municipalité de Monaco, and le Fédération Monégasque des Echecs. This was followed by a warm welcome to all the competitors – who had increased in number by a third on the previous year.

It was now time for battle to commence. But even before a pawn had been pushed, Fischer was making demands. After the drawing of lots ceremony, he wanted the first round started at 12 noon, instead of 2 p.m. Then for some reason he also requested that the sixth round be played after the first round, shunting all the other rounds forward. To keep the show on the road, the organisers adopted a policy of 'What Bobby wants, Bobby gets', but after the first round had been played, the unpredictable Fischer then changed his mind and asked that the original pairings be reinstated!

The organisers also had to contend with Bobby's refusal to play on the Sabbath. Their solution was for him to commence his game after 6 p.m. on the Saturday while the other players adhered to the normal starting time of 2 p.m. But this was not enough for Fischer, who threatened to withdraw unless all the other players started their games at 6 p.m. too. He then explained the way he felt in a lengthy $60 phone call to the USCF office in New York. However the crisis was eventually resolved by a combination of USCF Executive Director Ed Edmondson's powers of persuasion and the conversion of the Saturday to a rest day!

Fischer started to observe the Sabbath in the 60s as a result of his association with 'The Worldwide Church of God' a fundamentalist Christian sect linking Bible prophecy to current world events. Since tithing was expected from its members, over the years Bobby donated a lot of money to the church, which preached the gospel on radio, television and in the pages of its own *Plain Truth* magazine – at its height with a six million print run. Later the church was seriously damaged by charges of sexual misconduct and fraud and in the late 70s Bobby became totally disillusioned, parting company with the words: 'They rip off people's minds!'

The tournament started slowly but became more competitive as it progressed. This was because players of the same country were paired against each other in the first round: thus short draws were the order of the day in games between the Yugoslavs, Gligoric-Matanovic, the French, Mazzoni-Bergraser, and the Russians, Geller-Smyslov – but not the Americans, Lombardy-Fischer, where Bobby showed aggressive intent throughout and was rewarded with a win, though only after a close contest.



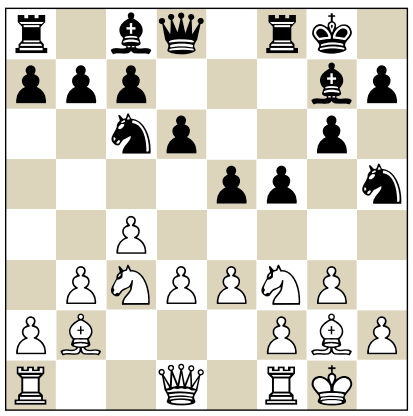
King's Indian Defence
William Lombardy
Bobby Fischer
Monte Carlo 1967 Round 1

This game appeared in Ray Keene's groundbreaking 1969 book *Flank Openings*, which provided lucid explanations for competitive players on a whole range of confusing openings, mainly starting with 1.♘f3, 1.g3, or 1.c4 and including a fianchetto of the king's and/or queen's bishop. So many of these amorphous lines remained unnamed that I once dubbed them UFO's – Unidentified Flank Openings! Some of Keene's comments are included here.

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.b3
One way of challenging Black's fearsome King's Indian bishop.

3...♗g7 4.♗b2 0-0 5.g3 d6 6.♗g2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.♘c3
8.d4 is dubious – 8...e4! 9.♘fd2 e3 10.fxe3 ♘g4, with an active game, was given long ago by Tartakower.

8...♘h5 9.e3 f5 10.d3



10...g5
Keene's instructive commentary here is: '10...♗d7? 11.♕d2 ♗e8 12.♘d5 ♗h6 13.♘e1 g5 14.f4 is Réti-Yates, Moscow 1925. Here White had the advantage, since Black's attack could proceed no further. Fischer's method is more dynamic. He intends to cast an iron hoop of pawns around White's king, while simultaneously setting up a barrier of pawns along the h1-a8 diagonal. Thus White's bishops will lack scope and any middle-game operation will find White's king jeopardised to a greater extent than Black's.

The remainder of the game illustrates in drastic fashion the evils of passive handling of this system for White.'

11.♘e1 Not 11.♘xe5 ♘xe5 12.♕xh5 ♘xd3 13.♕e2 ♘xb2, which is good for Black.

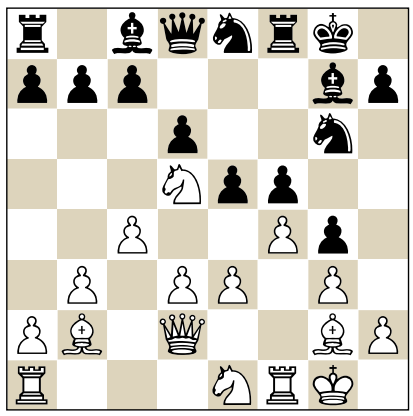
11...g4 12.f3 White has to challenge Black's aggressive pawn play.

12...♘f6 13.f4 *Informator* gives this position a plus for White!

13...♘e7 14.♕d2 The reply to 14.d4 is 14...exd4 15.exd4 d5!.

14...♘g6 15.♘d5
Now 15.d4 is met by 15...e4.

15...♘e8



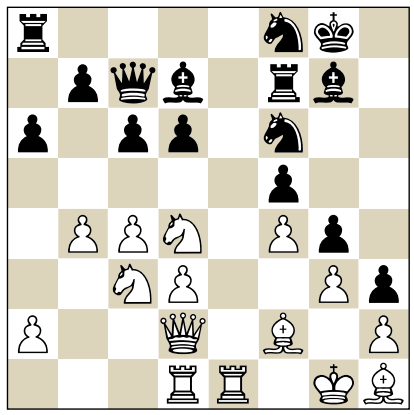
'Note the difference between this position and Réti-Yates. Here Black has already pushed his pawn to g4 and threatens h5-h4; his e-pawn is well protected against any White pressure; his queen's bishop has not been prematurely committed and White will have to lose time when his ♘d5 is driven from the centre', wrote Keene.

16.♖d1 c6 17.♘c3 exf4 18.exf4 h5 'Now if White tries to advance in the centre with 19.d4 there follows 19...h4 20.d5 h3 and White's king's bishop will never see the light of day again.'

19.♘c2 h4 20.♖fe1 ♘f6 21.♘e2 ♗d7
Not 21...♘e4 22.dxe4 ♗xb2 23.♘cd4 or 23.♕xd6, with advantage.

22.♗d4 ♖f7 23.♗f2 h3 24.♗h1
'White wants to execute the standard advance on the left flank with a4, b4 and b5. However, he is hampered by the fact that if the position is opened up then it will be his own king that is exposed to mating threats', says Keene. True, but in this game these threats do not appear to be deadly.

24...♕c7 25.♘c3 a6 26.♘d4 ♘f8 27.b4



27...♖d8
Keene advised an immediate 27...♔h7 because of Bob Wade's suggestion '28.b5! – for if 28...c5 29.♘d5 ♘xd5 30.♗xd5 cxd4 31.♖e7. The move b5 fits in with White's general plan of weakening Black's grip on the long white diagonal.'
However, after 28.b5, Black could just leave his pawns on c6 and a6 and there is nothing particular to fear. Moreover, even in Wade's line, Black could play instead 29...♕b8 and, after the knight on d4 retreats, continue with 30...♖e8, but not 30...♗xb5 which is dangerous after 31.♖b1 followed by 32.♘e7+.

28.♘b3 ♖e8 29.♖xe8 ♗xe8 30.a4 ♔h7 31.♘e2
Informator also suggests playing for b4-b5 and for this reason queries both this and White's next move.

31...♖e7 32.a5 ♔g6 33.♘c3 ♗f7 34.♖e1 ♖d7 35.♕c2 d5!
Opening up the position to get at the vulnerable white king.

36.♗b6 Maybe ♘c5 on either this or the following move.

36...♕c8
36...♖e7 is a useful zwischenzug.

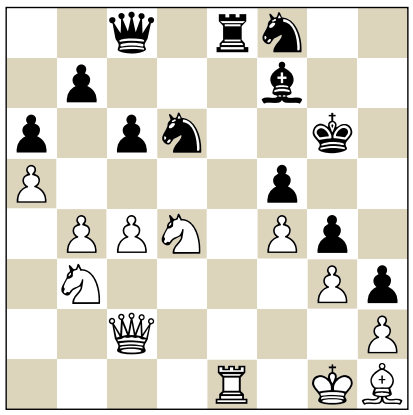
37.♘e2 37.♘d4 looks better.

37...dxc4 38.dxc4 ♖e7 39.♗c5
On an immediate 39.♗f2, Black could claim a slight advantage after 39...♘e4.

39...♖e8 40.♗f2 ♘e4 41.♗d4
Lombardy set the record straight in his notes in *Chess Life*: 'Instead of the sealed move 41.♗d4 White could have played with impunity 41.♘ed4

♘xf2 42.♖xe8 ♗xe8 43.♔xf2 ♗d7 44.♕d3 in which case he could hardly fear any grave danger.'

41...♗xd4+ 42.♘exd4 ♘d6!



43.♖e5?

'Incredibly, only two moves after resumption of play came this...', continued Lombardy. 'White should find it extremely difficult to lose after 43.♖xe8 ♕xe8 44.♔f2.'

43...♖xe5 44.fxe5 ♕e8!

Overlooked by Lombardy. Black will now invade, exploiting mating threats to win pawns.

45.♕e2

Of course 45.exd6 allows mate in one.

45...♗xc4 46.♕e3 ♗xb3 47.♘xb3 ♘c4 48.♕e2 ♘xe5 49.♘c5 ♕e7 50.♘xb7

He is doing the best he can.

50...♘fd7 51.♕d2

No good are either 51.♕xa6 ♕xb4 or 51.♕b2 ♘f3+ 52.♔f2 ♕e1 mate.

51...♘c4 52.♕c3

After 52.♕f2 ♕xb4 53.♗xc6 ♘de5 54.♗d5 ♕b1+ or 54.♗h1 ♘xa5 Black wins.

52...♕e2 53.♗xc6

Keene's final comment: 'The bishop finally escapes, but the dungeon bolts are sliding over White's king.'

53...♘d2 54.♕c1 ♘e5

White resigned.

As Fischer shook hands, accepting his opponent's resignation, his comment was: 'No hard feelings!' Indeed, the two of them went back a long way. Lombardy was six years older than Bobby and first met him in 1956 at the New York home of John W. Collins, chess teacher to so many American youngsters. The following year, Lombardy won the World Junior Championship in Toronto with eleven wins from eleven games – thus anticipating Fischer's 11-0 score in the U.S. Championship of 1963/64 by six years. Then, in 1958, he accompanied 15-year-old Bobby to his first international tournament – the world championship Interzonal in Portoroz, Yugoslavia. And, five years after Monaco, he was again Fischer's 'second' in his title match against Spassky at Reykjavik, where, immediately after being crowned world champion, Bobby expressed his gratitude by inscribing

> 'Ah, it doesn't matter,' replied Fischer dismissively, 'the others are irrelevant!'

Lombardy's personal copy of *My 60 Memorable Games*: 'To Bill: Thanks for your help and patience.'

Three weeks after returning to New York from Monaco, Lombardy, following years of study, was ordained a Roman Catholic priest – the first grandmaster priest since Ruy Lopez, 400 years earlier.

The game with Lombardy was the first of five straight wins for Fischer. Subsequently, Mazzoni made an unsound piece sacrifice against the Poisoned Pawn Variation. Forintos had to give up material to extricate himself from a mating net in a rook and opposite-coloured bishops endgame. Then Bergraser blundered away a piece after being confronted with a novelty in his favourite Scandinavian Defence...

I was watching the Bergraser game and remember how Bobby played his 6th move. He pulled his elbow right back and then quickly pushed it forward, picking up the g-pawn en route and thrusting it towards the g4-square. The combination of Fischer's sweeping arm movement and his extended fingers made the pawn move look longer than it actually was – in fact it reminded me of the Charge of the Light Brigade!

While all this was going on, a kindly old gentleman, who could best be described by the French word *sympathique* (we don't really have a precise equivalent in English), was standing next to me holding an elegant autograph book. As he was turning the gilt edged pages I could see he had already been very busy! Then, a few moves later, Fischer got up very abruptly from his chair, and the gentleman, without a word, held out the autograph book in his right hand and a pen in his left, silently appealing for a signature. Bobby looked straight at him and said firmly 'Not right now!' then took a 10 second look at the other games and was back in his seat again.

But the story has a happy ending. Later, after the game was over, Fischer, in a good mood after his quick win, was hanging around in the roped off area, as he sometimes did, chatting or analysing with other players. The autograph hunter was also hanging around – however clearly apprehensive about approaching Fischer a second time. But then Bobby, noticing him, shuffled over and, reaching out his hands across the rope, said, 'You wanted my autograph?' and took the book and pen from the gentleman's hands and signed his name: 'Bobby Fischer'. The fellow couldn't believe his luck and, speaking in English, responded appreciatively, 'Thank you, sir' – which Bobby acknowledged

The front side and one back side of the medals Bobby Fischer won in Monte Carlo.

DAVID DELUCIA COLLECTION

with a respectful nod of the head as he went away to continue a conversation with the Spanish master Antonio Medina.

I think the gentleman got a good deal here. At the Varna Olympiad in 1962, Miguel Najdorf asked Bobby to sign a couple of picture postcards to send back home to Argentina and was subjected to a charge of $5 per signature. On the other hand, a Bulgarian chess organiser at the same event had a different experience when he asked Fischer to sign a 'first day cover', which featured specially issued stamps commemorating the Olympiad. Fischer duly obliged, at no cost, but his writing sprawled over the whole envelope and the organiser complained: 'Bobby, your signature is so big that there is no room left for other grandmasters to sign their names.' 'Ah, it doesn't matter,' replied Fischer dismissively, 'the others are irrelevant!'

Mind you, it was a different story when it came to photographers. I saw Bobby rise from his chair in anger and glare menacingly when a cameraman attempted to take a shot of him during play. Chief Arbiter Alberic O'Kelly de Galway, who usually walked around in a stately fashion, immediately noticed what was happening and rushed over with a very stern expression on his face to prevent any escalation into a serious incident.

In the next round Bobby defeated Larsen, who tried too hard to win and in time pressure got caught out by an awkward pawn sacrifice which exposed weaknesses in his position. Larsen summed up Bobby's performance: 'Fischer won his first five games. He played well but for various reasons it seems these games cannot be regarded as his best achievements. They were simply good games.'

At this stage both Larsen and Geller were a long way behind Fischer but in the second half they worked their way up the tournament table. Incidentally, Geller had a high opinion of Larsen's play. He said: 'In recent years Larsen has achieved considerable successes. Third place in the Candidates' tournament is something not even Fischer has managed! If Fischer's play has the utmost clarity then Larsen's intentions are nearly always veiled, his ideas are based on the tiniest tactical nuances. This makes Larsen no less a dangerous rival than Fischer.'

These were the standings after Round 6: Fischer 5/5; Smyslov 4½/6; Matanovic 3½/6; Larsen 3/5; Geller 2½/4; Gligoric 2/4; Forintos 1½/5; Lombardy 1½/5; Mazzoni 1/5; Bergraser ½/5.

Unfortunately, before the start of Round 7, Dr. Bergraser had to be taken to hospital, where he was found to be suffering from pneumonia. Kind words were written in the daily bulletin but he was unable to take any further part in the tournament and his remaining opponents were credited with a point. However, Dr. Bergraser eventually made a full recovery and later even went on to gain the correspondence chess grandmaster title – at the age of 77!

And there was more 'sick leave'. Fischer was scheduled to play his Round 7 game against Smyslov on Thursday 30 March, but on the morning of the game the Russian was in agony with a raging toothache and unfit to play. He had to go to the dentist and have a wisdom tooth extracted. Curiously, when Smyslov returned to Monaco the following year he was accompanied by Mikhail Botvinnik – who also suffered from toothache and was treated by the same dentist.

As fate would have it, Prince Rainier had arranged to come and watch this round, anticipating the important Fischer-Smyslov clash. Though he was undoubtedly disappointed at the postponement of the game, he did have the opportunity to chat to a relaxed Fischer – and the photographers, just for once, were free to take pictures.

However, it was left to the other American, Lombardy, on the following day, to present an engraved scroll to the Prince, bestowing upon him honorary membership of the USCF! This presentation was made at a private ceremony behind the royal box after a concert at the *Salle Garnier*, in the company of both Princess Grace and famous avant-garde artist Marcel Duchamp, who was present throughout the tournament as a spectator.

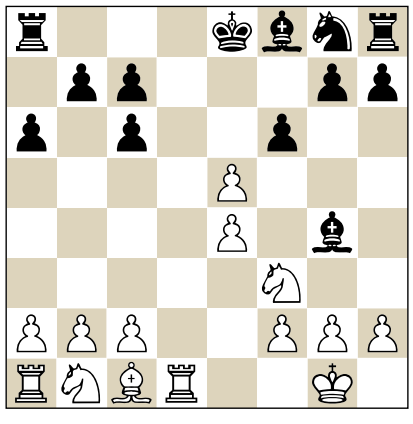
Marcel Duchamp, himself a former international player, supported the American Chess Foundation which gave financial help to Americans taking part in tournaments at home and abroad. A few years earlier, he had asked his fellow artists, even Picasso, to donate works of art in order to raise money for chess at auction.

Fischer unhesitatingly showed the same sportsmanship as the other players had shown him in rearranging his game with Smyslov to the free day – April 1st. But as this was a Saturday, Fischer's Sabbath, play had to start after 6 p.m. But Bobby stipulated that the game be played behind closed doors in the small analysis room rather than the main hall where

there was a risk of distraction from the amateur players. The organisers compensated by placing a demonstration board outside the room where the game could be followed move by move by the many spectators.

Ruy Lopez
Bobby Fischer
Vasily Smyslov
Monte Carlo 1967 Round 7

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗xc6 dxc6 5.0-0 f6 6.d4 ♗g4 7.dxe5 ♕xd1 8.♖xd1



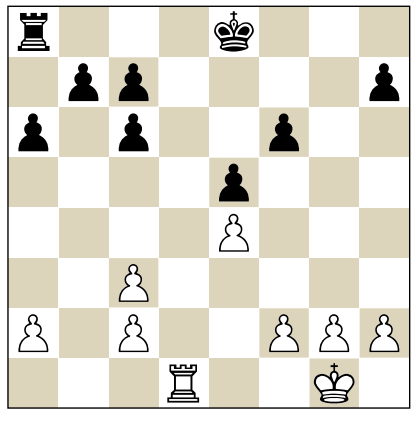
8...fxe5?

Fischer recommended:
'8...♗xf3! 9.gxf3 fxe5 10.♗e3! followed by ♘d2-c4 with pressure. If 10...♘e7 11.f4! keeps the initiative.'
He said 10.♗e3! was 'even better than 10.f4 ♘f6 11.♘c3! when 11...♗d6 12.fxe5 ♗xe5 13.♘a4! gives White the better of a probable draw' – analysis which represented an improvement on 11.fxe5 ♘xe4 12.♗e3 ♗c5 13.♘d2 ♘xd2 14.♗xc5 0-0-0 as played in Lee-Gligoric, Hastings 1965/66.
In fact it was Gligoric's annotations to this game in the English magazine *Chess* that first gave Bobby the idea of playing the Exchange Variation – which he unleashed later the same year at the Havana Olympiad, defeating Jimenez, Portisch and Gligoric himself.

9.♖d3! ♗xf3 10.♖xf3 ♘f6 11.♘c3 ♗b4 12.♗g5! ♗xc3 13.bxc3!

'Was Black playing for the cheap trap 13.♗xf6? ♗xb2 14.♗xg7?? ♗xa1 15.♗xh8 0-0-0!' wrote Fischer.

13...♖f8 14.♗xf6 ♖xf6 15.♖xf6 gxf6 16.♖d1



In his ground-breaking best games collection *My 60 Memorable Games* Fischer claims that 'White should have won the ending', but subsequent games and analysis, where Black played actively, suggested that things were by no means so clear.

Anyway let's fast forward to move 39 where the following position was reached...

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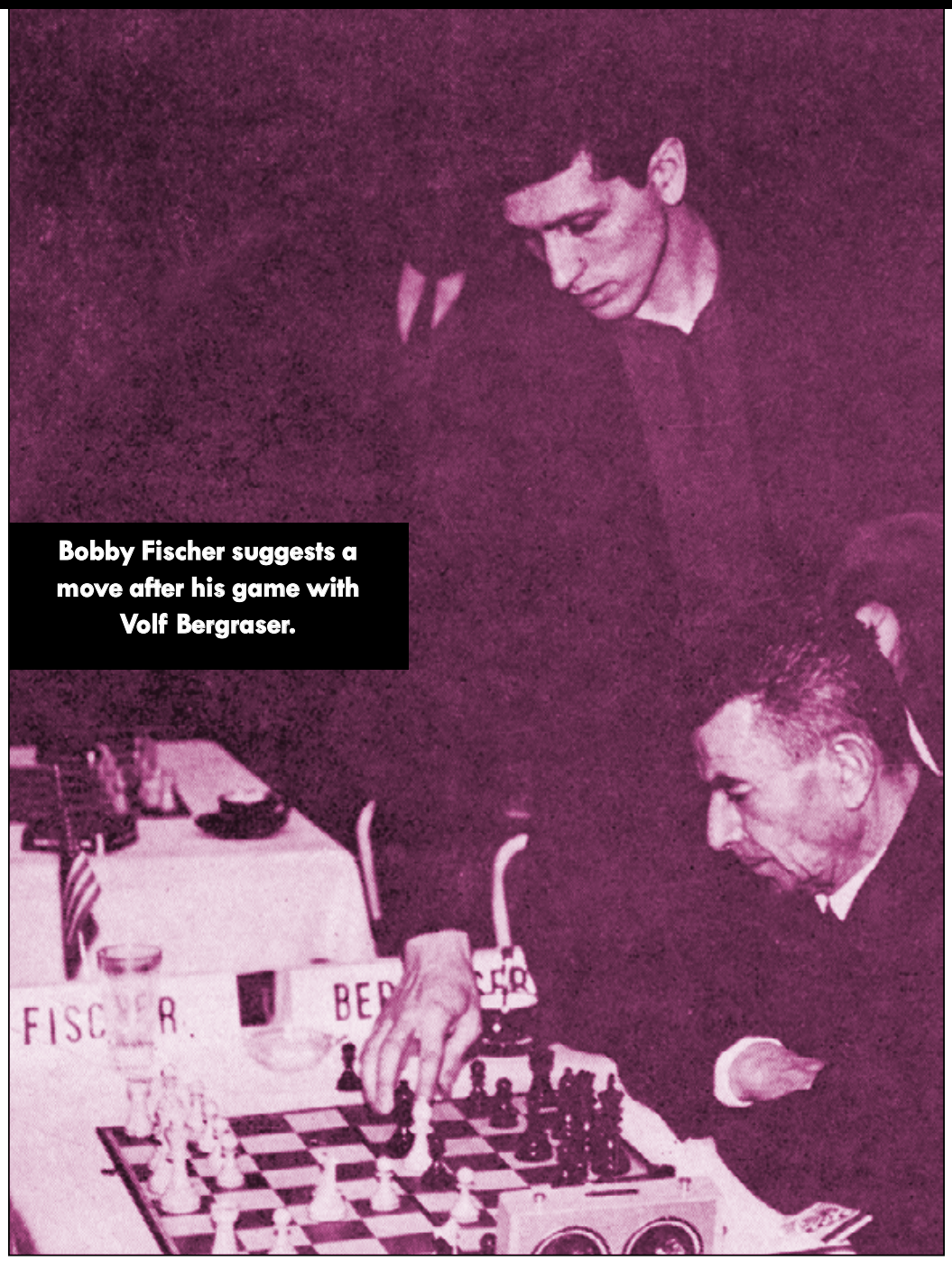
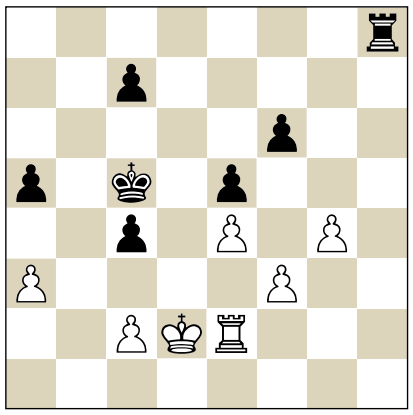


Bobby Fischer suggests a move after his game with Volf Bergraser.



... and Smyslov continued: **39...♖h1**
...whereas 39...♖h3 would have put Fischer under long term pressure, e.g. 40.♖f2 ♖g3 41.♔c3 a4 42.♖f1 ♖g2 43.♖h1 ♖e2 44.♖h3 ♖e3+ 45.♔d2 ♔d4 is given by Lombardy, with the comment: 'True, there are many variations to consider but all seem just so futile as the line given. Suffice it to say that Smyslov was able to demonstrate the win to Geller, O'Kelly, Lombardy, which trio of grandmasters could find no adequate defence.'

Then again, Geller wrote: 'Smyslov had only 2-3 minutes for his last move before the time control. It is not difficult to convince oneself that had Smyslov played 39...♖h3 White would hardly have been able to save the game, e.g. 40.♖f2 ♖g3 41.♔c3 (41.♖f1 ♖g2+ 42.♔c3 ♖e2) 41...♖g1 or 40.♔e3 ♖h1 41.♖g2 ♖a1 42.g5 ♖xa3+ 43.♔d2 fxg5 44.♖xg5 ♔d4 in both cases with clear advantage to Black.'
Perhaps, with computer analysis, the position is still objectively drawn, but Smyslov, a great rook and pawn endgame player, could have tortured Fischer for a long time.

40.♖g2

½-½. Afterwards Fischer pointed out the possible pitfall: 40...♔d4 41.c3+ ♔c5 42.g5 ♖a1 43.gxf6! ♖a2+ 44.♔e3 ♖xg2 45.f7 winning.

Because of the delay in playing his game with Smyslov, Fischer actually conceded his first draw in Round 8 against the solid Matanovic. He then had a rest day in Round 9, while both Smyslov and Larsen were scoring important wins.

Geller said of Larsen's strong play towards the end of the tournament: 'Larsen is an exceptionally aggressive player. In the Monte Carlo tournament he displayed outstanding fighting qualities. After upsetting defeats against Fischer and Matanovic, which can be put down to excessive optimism, in the last rounds the Dane collected 3 points against Gligoric, Geller and Lombardy.

Smyslov played calmly and confidently throughout the tournament and was never in any trouble. He joked about the way the pairings worked out for him: 'I play a player after Fischer discourages him!'

Victor Soultanbeieff, originally from Russia although long since a Belgian citizen, often chatted to Smyslov and Geller in Monaco and wrote a very nice description of the final round in the German magazine *Schach Echo*:

'After the end of the penultimate round the leading group was as follows:

Fischer 7; Smyslov 6; Geller, Larsen 5; Matanovic 5 (all games completed), Lombardy 4½, Forintos 3/9; Mazzoni 1; Bergraser ½ (retired sick after Round 6).

Only three games remained to be played, but these were very important for the final placings: Fischer-Geller, Smyslov-Gligoric and Larsen-Lombardy. The Danish grandmaster absolutely had to win his game to achieve 3rd place; on the other hand half a point was enough for Fischer and Smyslov to maintain their respective 1st and 2nd places. This is what the public expected and doubtless also Smyslov thought the same: "I have no chance to catch up with Bobby; his play is too strong and Efim can only hope for a draw with him. Why should I tire myself out to no avail? An honourable draw is sufficient for me."

This was the reason for the shortest game of the whole tournament, Smyslov-Gligoric, 10 moves. It is curious that Smyslov began the tournament with an equally brief encounter – 11 moves against Geller.

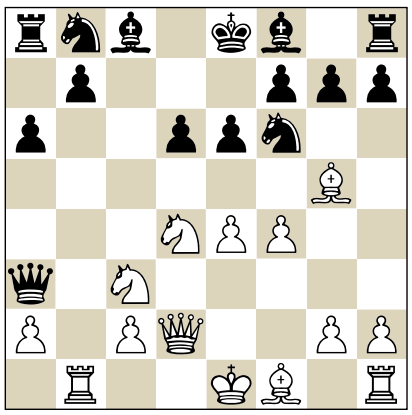
However, to everybody's surprise, Geller won against Fischer. But because of Smyslov's short draw, the American remained in the sole lead. In fact there was a second psychological miscalculation by Smyslov. In the two previous rounds, Gligoric had played a couple of long hard games (70 moves against Larsen and 57 moves against Fischer), losing both. The second of these games ended only an hour before the start of his encounter with Smyslov. Gligoric had no time to rest and was naturally very tired and discouraged. Looking at the situation objectively: he was already handicapped before the game. Undoubtedly, fighters such as Larsen, Alekhine, Botvinnik or Tal, who play 'psychological' chess, would have understood how to exploit such a weakness in the opponent. For sure, the in-form Russian grandmaster (he played several outstanding games in Monte Carlo) had a tournament victory in the palm of his hand. But...the game was drawn.

On the other hand, Larsen, after a hard struggle and protracted manoeuvring, managed to beat his opponent, Lombardy. And so the genial Danish grandmaster had defeated three opponents, one after the other: Gligoric, Geller and Lombardy! He said he was sorry that the tournament was now at an end, since he had only just found his best form!'

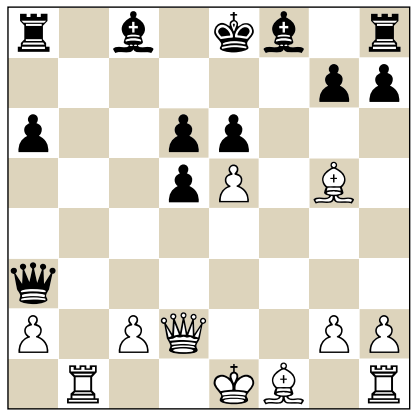
Here is Fischer's sensational last round game. After a few moves had been played, Bobby got up and checked for himself that Smyslov had in fact agreed a draw with Gligoric. Then, in the knowledge that first prize was assured, irrespective of the result of his game, he took up the challenge of a complicated struggle.

Sicilian Defence
Bobby Fischer
Efim Geller
Monte Carlo 1967 Round 11

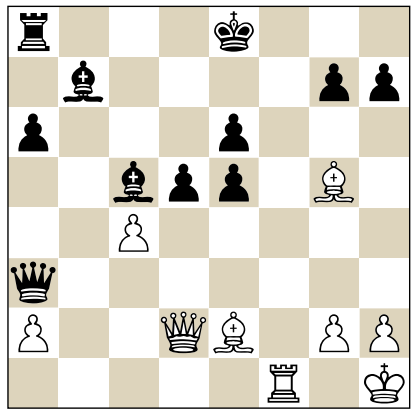
1.e4 c5 At this stage of his career, Geller mostly defended the black side of a Ruy Lopez.
2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 A complete surprise – Geller favoured ...♘c6 Sicilians.
6.♗g5 And a complete surprise in return. Fischer's preferred continuations were 6.♗c4 or 6.h3.
6...e6 7.f4 ♕b6 Probably a spontaneous psychological ploy – Fischer is now confronted with his own favourite Poisoned Pawn Variation!
8.♕d2 ♕xb2 9.♖b1 ♕a3



10.f5 In the third round at Monaco, Mazzoni had played instead 10.e5 dxe5 11.fxe5 ♘fd7 12.♗c4 ♕a5 13.♘xe6 fxe6 14.♗xe6 – but after 14...♕xe5+ 15.♕e3 ♕xe3+ 16.♗xe3 ♘c6, Fischer held on to the material and won in 45 moves.
10...♘c6 11.fxe6 fxe6 12.♘xc6 bxc6 13.e5 ♘d5
Gligoric was crushed in the line 13...dxe5 14.♗xf6 gxf6 15.♘e4 ♗e7 16.♗e2 0-0, but Fischer subsequently discovered the defence 16...h5.
In his autobiographical *The Application of Chess Theory*, Geller explained that he wanted to drag Fischer into a wild position, which would not be to his liking. He also admitted that he was playing intuitively: 'I was playing this variation for the first time in my life. It was inconceivable to try and work out all the possible complications at the board, and I decided that Black's pawn centre should enable his king to "sit it out"'.
14.♘xd5 cxd5
Not 14...exd5? 15.e6! and if 15...♗xe6 then 16.♕e2 wins a piece for White.



15.♗e2
This was Fischer's new move. Previously 15.c4 had been played, with the sequel 15...dxe5 16.cxd5 ♗e7 or 15...dxc4 16.♗xc4 d5.
15...dxe5 16.0-0 ♗c5+ Later 16...♖a7 was found to be better. The rook can then participate in the defence.
17.♔h1 ♖f8!
Seeking exchanges. After playing quickly up to here, Fischer now plunged into deep thought before attacking the centre in a manner that is typical for this variation.
18.c4 ♖xf1+ 19.♖xf1 ♗b7



No wonder Fischer now thought for 20 minutes and still made a mistake. There are so many ways to proceed that it is extremely difficult to decide which move is best. Over the last 40 years analysts have come up with all sorts of tries, e.g. 20.♖f3, 20.♖b1, 20.♗h5+, 20.♗d1 (aiming to deflect the black queen and mate with ♗a4+) and 20.♗f3, but none seem to be that

Bobby Fischer kibitzes as Gligoric and Geller have another look at their game.

clear. Even in the latest Bobby Fischer collection by Karsten Müller, after the suggested 20.♕c2 e4 21.♗h5+ g6 22.♗g4, can't Black defend with 22...♗c8 ? Is there a reader who can provide categorical proof that this is a 'White to play and win' position!

20.♗g4? dxc4 21.♗xe6 ♕d3 22.♕e1 ♗e4 23.♗g4 ♖b8 24.♗d1 ♔d7 25.♖f7+ ♔e6

White resigned, since after 26.♖xg7 ♗xg2+ 27.♔xg2 ♖b2+ 28.♔h1 ♕d5+ White is mated.

For the record, Fischer's lifetime score against Geller was 3 wins, 5 losses and 2 draws.

Larsen said afterwards: 'Geller deserves praise: the previous night he had analysed his adjourned game against me for 5 hours, only slept for 2 hours, and played on in a depressing lost endgame for 3½ hours. Then, after only a half-hour break he had to face Fischer. To win that game represents a great performance.'

On the other hand, he summed up Bobby's play like this: 'In his last four encounters Fischer's play was uncertain. Perhaps even he suffers from fatigue? He spoilt a promising position against Matanovic and as a result had to be satisfied with a draw. He had the better endgame against Smyslov, but still came close to defeat. Against Gligoric, he stood worse throughout but the Yugoslav grandmaster incorrectly sacrificed a piece on his sealed move and lost. Then he was defeated by Geller.'

Geller was more generous: 'Fischer performed excellently. It seems to me that in the present cycle of the world championship, the American has exceptionally serious intentions. The following example is characteristic. He was invited to give a simultaneous display in Genoa but Fischer replied that a simultaneous exhibition would be harmful to his creative work and he could only deliver a lecture...'

On their return to Belgrade, Gligoric and Matanovic gave a press conference where the main talking point was appearance fees. Fischer was the only player to receive such a payment, which amounted to the princely sum of $2,000 – twice as much as he got for winning the tournament! Matanovic thought it was wrong to favour one player over another in this way, but Gligoric saw it as a step in the right direction for getting better conditions for professional players. When Petrosian's refusal to play in Monaco was also attributed to this controversy, Grandmaster Trifunovic said that the world champion had probably never even asked for an appearance fee, so had no cause to complain. Upon which Matanovic replied that the Russian Chess Federation wouldn't allow him to ask for one anyway!

To conclude here are a few personal impressions I gained from watching the grandmasters in action at Monte Carlo.

During play, Fischer was a model of intense concentration, frequently leaning forward with his head halfway over the board and only sometimes stretching backwards, gazing into space. On the infrequent occasions he did take a very brief walk between moves, he loped along with quick jerky movements, stooping a little and swinging his arms out in front – like a bear!

Geller, a former sailor, had a different walk, strolling along at a leisurely pace and swaying from side to side as if on board a ship. And whenever he came up close to the perimeter rope he would take hold of it like a handrail on deck, whilst supporting his customary cigarette between the thumb and forefinger of his other hand. His short, stocky build, weightlifter's arms, ruddy complexion and pleasant expression led one spectator to remark: 'He looks like a French restaurateur!'

By contrast, Smyslov looked very ambassadorial. He would habitually parade up and down with his hands behind his back, whilst it was his opponent's turn to move. He was tall and broad – almost as big as a door. So big in fact that his chair looked too small for him. Whenever he was calculating some precise tactical detail he would place his elbows on the table, clench his fists and cradle his head in them until he had worked everything out to his satisfaction. Then, when his game became purely a matter of technique, he would sit back in his chair looking around as if he hadn't a care in the world.

Larsen, like Smyslov, also stood up very straight with his hands behind his back. But more than that, he seemed to puff out his chest and move his head slightly backwards while watching the other games, which gave an impression of scepticism or even disapproval!

As a postscript, Fischer was not invited back Monte Carlo – he was simply too much trouble! ■

Hans Ree

A Well-Lived Life

On January 28, Johan van Hulst, a passionate chess player who always considered chess a sublime irrelevance, turned 100. His fellow club member Hans Ree joined in the celebrations.

I used to greet him by saying something like 'Ah, professor, still above ground?' because I knew that he liked such jokes about his venerable age.

As a frivolous relief from watching the work of the superbrains at the Tata Steel tournament in Wijk aan Zee, I had a look at the politicians. Since the 1970s they have had their own tournament there. Originally there had been two groups, one for members of one of the two Chambers of the Dutch Parliament and another group for former members. Later these groups merged into one, and through the years became more and more dominated by former parliamentarians.

In 2010, no current Members of Parliament took part. Asked for the reason of this sad state of affairs, one former member who had played in the tournament declined to comment, or rather prevaricated by saying that if he expounded his ideas about the situation, he would lower himself by questioning the intellectual level of the present generation of politicians.

I think he was too harsh. Though it is tempting to describe the theatre of politics as a burlesque show – and sometimes the politicians give ample reason for it – there are in fact many intelligent people among the present members of the Dutch Parliament. Maybe they are too busy to play in a chess tournament, but it is possible that the interest in chess among active politicians has indeed waned. Bad for them, but also bad for us, for it is always handy to have a few lines to the centre of political power.

This year the situation was the same. The man who had not wanted to insult the present politicians had died in the intervening year. The average age of the players was high.

Yet there was an age difference of almost 30 years between the players of the game that I was watching. They were Jan Nagel and Johan van Hulst. Van Hulst would celebrate his hundredth anniversary about a week later. Nagel is 71 years old. His chess credentials include being a former president of the Max Euwe Centre and the father-in-law of Yasser Seirawan.

Last year these two had shared first place in the group, and Van Hulst's comment on the result had been that at his age he should no longer have the ambition to finish clear first, shrewdly implying that this had in fact been his ambition.

Now, in 2011, they met in the last round. Nagel was leading the group, half a point ahead of Van Hulst. He was attacking, and though Van Hulst's position was quite defensible, it was clear that Nagel was slightly better. From a position of strength he offered a draw to secure first place.

Without spending more than a second's thought on the offer, the centenarian minus a week answered curtly: 'A draw gives me nothing', and played on. Later the game was drawn anyway, but Van Hulst had shown that he still had the right spirit.

An Eye on Lilienthal

At the opening ceremonies of the Wijk aan Zee tournament – successively named after Hoogovens, Corus and Tata, but for him always the Hoogoven tournament – I used to greet him by saying something like 'Ah, professor, still above ground?' because I knew that he liked such jokes about his venerable age. Once he answered by quoting some lines of the Dutch 19th-cen-

tury poet Hendrik Tollens: 'and do not care for the result, but only count the aim.' I misunderstood him at the time and asked if he meant to say that winning was more important than taking part. 'Have we ever played with anything else in mind than winning?' he asked joyfully, and of course I could only agree.

At the opening of the 2010 tournament gentle jokes about his age would have been unseemly, because for the first time I saw him in a wheelchair. He almost apologized, saying that it was not always that he let himself be wheeled around and that at his home, where he was living alone, he could still do everything himself.

He mentioned Andor Lilienthal, born, like him, in 1911, and talked about the possibility that in 2011 they might celebrate their hundredth birthday together or even play a match for the 'Over-100 World Championship'. 'Deo volente of course', he added, a phrase he often uses when his personal future is involved. We know now that God was not willing, as Lilienthal died a few months later that year.

The suggestion of a match was not meant seriously, of course, as Van Hulst would have been, well, no match for Lilienthal.

He was a strong player in the 1930s, when he could hold his own against some of the best players of the Netherlands. At some point he was asked by the Dutch federation if he would play in the qualification tournament for the Dutch championship and whether he might be available for the Dutch team for the 1935 Olympiad in Warsaw.

Van Hulst considered the consequences. He was a school teacher and for the Dutch championship he would have to take two weeks of unpaid leave. The same went for the Olympiad, which would also involve all kinds of expenses. He had a family to support and decided that he would stay just a devoted amateur with only the ambition to play as well as he could, but with chess always coming second to his professional career.

As it happened, the Netherlands did not take part in the Warsaw Olympiad. Why not? They had taken part in earlier Olympiads. Maybe the Dutch federation had to hoard every penny for the World Championship match between Alekhine and Euwe later that year.

ARNO VRINS

Johan van Hulst: 'A draw gives me nothing.'

Death Sentence

Van Hulst's professional career prospered. Starting out as a primary school teacher, he became a teacher of Dutch and History at grammar schools and later the director of the Hervormde Kweekschool in Amsterdam, a Christian training college for prospective teachers.

After World War II he became Professor of pedagogics and also served in important functions in Dutch politics.

The period that must have had the gravest impact on his life was during the war, when he was director of the Kweekschool.

Opposite his school, in a street called Plantage Middenlaan, was the Hollandsche Schouwburg. Before the war this had been a theatre, but from 1942 on it was used by the Germans as a transit place for Jews from Amsterdam and its surroundings before they were deported to concentration camps. Next to the school was a children's crèche that had been requisitioned by the Germans, who didn't want to have babies and little children around at the Hollandsche Schouwburg, as a place to stay for the children of the Jews who were rounded up at the other side of the street. They would be re-united with their parents when they were deported to the camps.

At the crèche, German surveillance was less strict than at the Hollandsche Schouwburg, and the director of the crèche, Henriëtte Pimentel, assisted by others, managed to smuggle maybe a thousand children out of the building and remove their names from the administrative papers.

Hundreds of these children went by way of Van Hulst's school. Its garden was separated from the crèche only by a hedge, so that the children could easily be handed over. They stayed at the school until other resistance groups brought them to places

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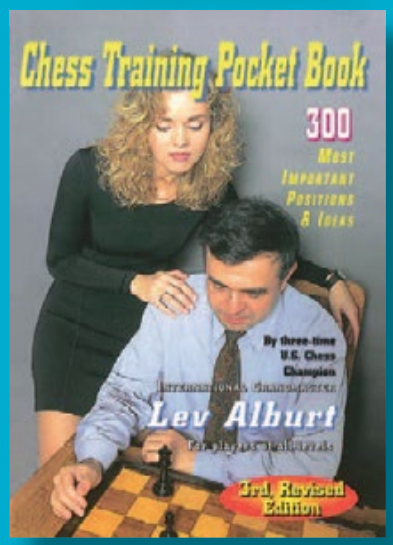

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where they could be hidden more permanently.

This practice went unnoticed for many months until the end of September 1943, when the Germans dismantled the crèche. At the time, Van Hulst's role was still unknown to them, but on April 14, 1945, a few weeks before the German capitulation, Van Hulst was sentenced to death. Sentenced 'in absentia', because he had been warned and had gone in hiding. Much later he was to be honoured by Yad Vashem, the Israeli Remembrance organization, for his brave acts during the war.

After the war he wanted 'to close the book on that period', as he put it recently in an interview. He didn't want to talk about it, nor did he become a member of one of the organizations of people who had resisted the German occupation.

Blood and Mud

As far as I know, Van Hulst spoke most extensively about his wartime experience in 2003, in an interview taken by Jolande Withuis, a sociologist who has written several books about the period.

Van Hulst had known her grandfather, the problemist J.J. Withuis, and her father, the chess journalist and organizer Berry Withuis, and was touched by this chance to talk to a third-generation Withuis.

He spoke about the last day of the crèche, when the head of the German *Sicherheitsdienst* Aus der Fünten came there to announce that the 80 or 90 children who were still there would be deported the next day. For Van Hulst this meant that he could bring some of the children to hiding places, saving them from almost certain death. But he could only save some, so a terrible choice had to be made.

Van Hulst: 'The director of the crèche, Pimentel, had already been deported at that time. Virrie Cohen, her successor, came to me. Heaven may preserve you from such a moment. We picked 12 children. Later you think: why not 13? The children knew what was going on. I asked the older children: do you know an address? Go and seek shelter. That choice... For instance I thought: that child has a rash; I may not find a place for it. Between us I can tell you that now that I get older, tears sometimes run down my cheeks when I see a class of schoolchildren.'

And about the time that he was in hiding to escape arrest he said: 'These were the most fearful weeks of my life. The idea that with victory in sight you would still perish. I had a wife and two daughters, four and six years old. You thought: what would my children think later? Should daddy not have thought more about us?'

After the war, aware from psychological literature that such experiences could have traumatic effects, he armed himself against traumatic memories: 'I consciously thought: now I wear clothes that are stained with blood and mud and as soon as it is over I'll put them away and dress in fresh, clean clothes. And I had my faith. Without it I would not have managed.'

Governing the Country

As I wrote earlier, his professional career as a professor of pedagogics flourished, and also as a politician he became quite influential.

Membership of the First Chamber of Dutch Parliament (the 'Senate') is only a part-time job, often taken by elder statesmen. The real centre of political power is the Second Chamber, but one should not downplay the role of the Senate, as all Dutch laws have to be passed in both Houses.

In the Senate, from 1956 till 1981, Van Hulst was at first the leader of the CHU, a small Protestant party, and later of the CDA, the big Christian party into which the Roman Catholic party and two Protestant parties had merged. From 1961 to 1970 he was also a member of the European parliament.

With Jolande Withuis he talked about the weekly consultations between CDA prime minister Lubbers, the CDA leader in the Second Cham-

ber Aantjes and himself: 'We governed the country. Now that I am saying this, it sounds very arrogant to me.'

Van Hulst felt a great sense of betrayal when in 1978 it emerged that his colleague Aantjes, who had always played the role of the social conscience of Dutch politics, had been a member of an SS branch during the war. Maybe forced by circumstances, and without having committed crimes, but still...

As a social scientist Van Hulst was a prolific writer. Though the political groups to which he belonged were considered to be conservative, as a professor he had few problems with the student rebellions of the '60s. When the students demanded that the list of books to be read be replaced by a Marxist list, he disarmed them saying: 'Good, we'll take both lists; you're not afraid of some hard work, are you?' and once, when his department was occupied by rebel students, he gave them a chess simul. 'My colleagues criticized me for it. Jealousy. It's nice if you are on the right side of jealousy', he said to Jolande Withuis.

Crossing a Road

The Amsterdam chess club Caïssa, of which Van Hulst has been an active member from the time of its founding until now, published a book in celebration of his centenary: *Johan van Hulst – Een leven lang schaken als sublieme bijzaak* (A life with chess as a sublime side issue). An anecdote told in that book by Dennis Breuker, a former president of the club, bears witness to the old man's unceasing combativeness.

Van Hulst, late at night near his house, started to cross the road when the pedestrian traffic light in the shape of a little man walking, had turned red. No traffic was in sight. A policeman stopped him, saying that he had ignored a red light.

'That little man is there for me, I am not here for him', said Van Hulst. The policeman became angry and started to write a ticket. 'Your age?' 'Let's make it 99', said Van Hulst. If you think you note a shade of coquetry here, you may well be right.

Anyway, the policeman became even angrier and said that he should not lie to a policeman, after which Van Hulst produced his identity card, which proved that he was indeed 99 years old, and said that he intended to file a complaint because he had been called a liar. The policeman was taken aback and the traffic ticket was torn up. Well done, Professor!

Traps of Marriage

Part of the book consists of articles written by Van Hulst himself in the past. One of these is about Andor Lilienthal. It appeared originally in the magazine *CaïssaNieuws* in 1991 as a reaction to an interview with Lilienthal by Genna Sosonko and the journalist Max Pam in the Dutch weekly *Vrij Nederland*.

After reading this interview Van Hulst had written a letter to Pam in which he indicated an omission in Lilienthal's story of his life, viz. that in 1936 (says Van Hulst, but it must be 1935) Lilienthal had lived in Amstelveen, near Amsterdam, married to a Dutch woman. Van Hulst had seen him there often and still remembered that Lilienthal had walked with a limp. Then suddenly Lilienthal left for Moscow, and after several letters from his wife he only sent her a telegram announcing that their marriage was over. His Dutch wife implored Euwe to intervene, which he did, but to no avail.

Apart from the slight mistake about the year 1936, this story concurs with the established historical facts that Lilienthal did indeed walk with a limp and that he took part in the tournament in Moscow in 1935, fell in love with a Russian girl and remained married to her for 45 years.

Pam answered Van Hulst that he had heard the story about Lilienthal suddenly leaving a woman in the lurch from Sosonko. However, Sosonko, basing himself on Russian gossip, thought that the woman involved was Spanish, not Dutch.

So, was she Dutch or Spanish? Both possibilities seem plausible. In 1934 Lilienthal spent a lot of time in Spain, in 1935 in the Netherlands.

A solution to the conundrum is given by George Koltanowski in his booklet *Chessnicdotes*. Koltanowski, like Lilienthal, took part in the tournament in the Catalan town Sitges in 1934, so they may have exchanged confidences. Koltanowski writes about Lilienthal: 'You see, he discovered a way out of not having the means to travel and live in high style. He married someone well to do in each country! He stayed for a short while and then, without even a goodbye kiss, he would leave Mrs. Lilienthal... never to even answer any mail which might catch up with him at some tournament.'

So, if we can take Koltanowski on trust – a big if – the riddle has been solved.

A Steady Hand

A few weeks after Van Hulst's 100th anniversary there was a celebration at Caïssa, which is not only his club but also mine. The first copy of the book was handed to him. There were laudatory speeches and witty rejoinders by the hero of the evening. When I left, a bit tired, he was still energetically signing books with a steady hand.

We should not glamourize the life of a centenarian. One interviewer recently asked Van Hulst if he had any ailments, and got the answer: 'Do you have a few weeks while I sum up the list?' In Wijk aan Zee this year he said that this would have to be his last tournament, because playing five games in two days had become too much of a burden. He doubted whether he would be able to continue coming to Caïssa every week.

For all that, those present at that celebratory evening went home pondering on their own life and health and wondering how they themselves would manage in old age. As Van Hulst had put it himself eight years earlier, it's nice to be on the right side of jealousy. ■

Jan Timman

Further Aix-les-Bains Highlights

It had been a long time since France had had a really big tournament. In 1988, the then Minister of Defence, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, who also was the Mayor of Belfort, supported the initiative to organize the second World Cup tournament in his hometown. Kasparov won, Karpov finished second. This is how things were in those days. In their game against each other, Karpov, as White, introduced a novelty in a Grünfeld and won convincingly. The organizers were proud of both the game and the novelty. The tournament book was entitled *Le coup de Belfort* (the move of Belfort).

I wonder if the present grandmasters still know this novelty. The variation in question has disappeared from practice, and there are so many novelties these days that they're often hardly noticed.

This year the European Championship was held in a little town in eastern France, not far south of Belfort. The tournament in Aix-les-Bains had almost 400 participants. Slightly under a quarter of them had a 2600+ rating, which made it an enormously strong open tournament.

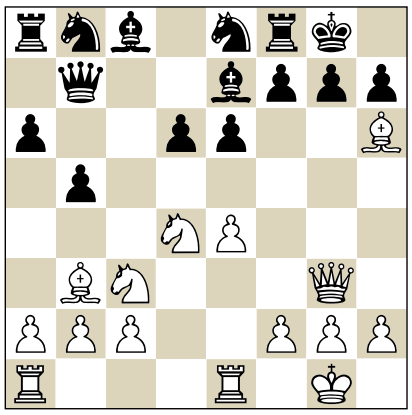
I would have loved to play in Aix-les-Bains, but other commitments kept me at home. But I could follow the tournament live, which is a special pleasure in itself.

True to tradition, the first round saw all kinds of interesting things, plus of course the quick wins of top grandmasters over lesser gods.

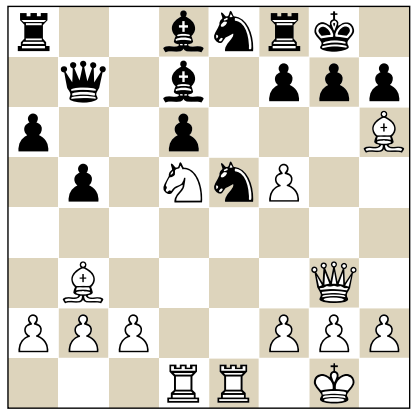
There are so many novelties these days that they're often hardly noticed.

SI 13.14 – B87
Sergey Rublevsky
Erik Zude
Aix-les-Bains 2011 (1)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗c4 e6 7.♗b3 b5 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♕f3 ♕b6 10.♗e3 ♕b7 11.♕g3 0-0 12.♗h6 ♘e8 13.♖fe1



13...♗d7
The start of a bad plan, which is very dangerous in this position. Good moves are 13...♗f6 and 13...♔h8.
14.♖ad1 ♘c6 15.♘d5!
The first knight jumps forward.
15...♗d8 16.♘f5!
Followed by the second.
16...exf5 17.exf5 ♘e5

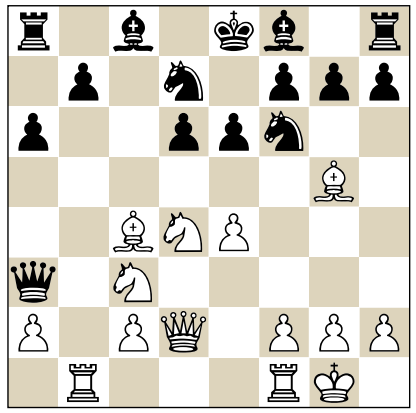


18.♖xe5 White is going right through his opponent. **18...dxe5 19.f6 g6 20.♘e7+** Black resigned.

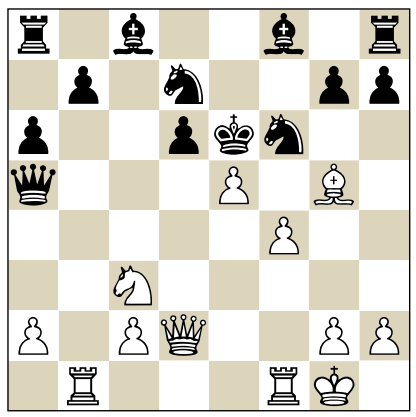
But not all games went so smoothly.

SI 4.1 – B94
Ivan Cheparinov
Denis Kadric
Aix-les-Bains 2011 (1)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗g5 ♘bd7 7.♗c4 ♕b6 8.♕d2 ♕xb2 9.♖b1 ♕a3 10.0-0 e6



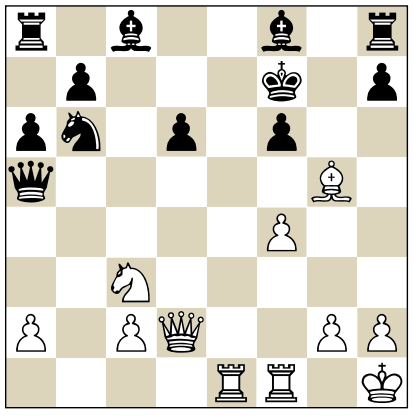
11.♗xe6 This bishop sacrifice has had a bad reputation since the game Radjabov-Gelfand, Gothenburg 2005. **11...fxe6 12.♘xe6 ♕a5 13.f4 ♔f7 14.e5 ♔xe6**



Cool-headed and strong. **15.♖be1 ♔f7** According to the computer, Black could safely have captured on e5, but the text will do. **16.♔h1** Not very impressive, but this king move turns out to be successful. **16...♘b6** The first step away from the straight and narrow. After 16...h6 Black would have been winning.

17.exf6 gxf6

After this second error White takes control. He should have played 17...♗f5.



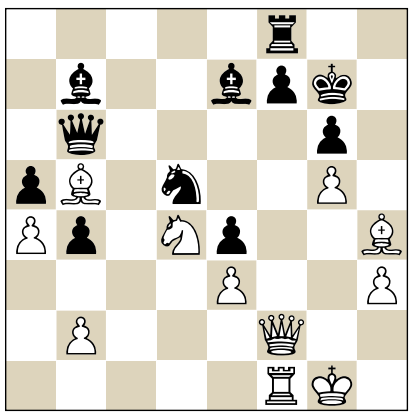
18.♗xf6!

White finishes the game flawlessly.

18...♖g8 19.♗d4 ♘a4 20.♕e2 ♗d7 21.f5 ♖xg2 22.♔xg2 ♘xc3 23.♕h5+ ♔g8 24.♕g5+ ♔f7 25.♕f6+ ♔g8 26.♕h8+

Black resigned.

Cheparinov must have had some anxious moments. Other favourites fared even worse.

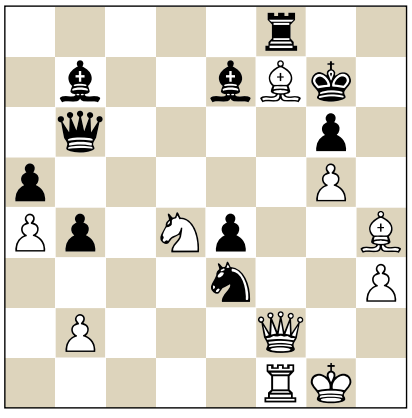


Potapov-Vitiugov
Aix-les-Bains 2011 (1)
position after 37....♖f8

Black is slightly better. In time-trouble, White launches a bizarre action.

38.♗e8?! ♘xe3! The refutation. Black will win at least a pawn.

39.♗xf7? White seems to have lost track, but this emergency measure is unexpectedly successful.

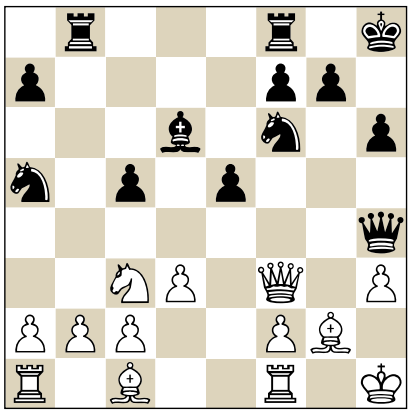


39...♗d5? There was no defence after 39... ♕xd4, winning a piece.

40.♕xe3 ♗c5 41.♗f2

It is possible that Vitiugov had overlooked this simple move. I also sometimes fail to see in my calculations that a certain piece has left its square, in this case the queen having left square f2. All fire has gone out of the position, and the game eventually ended in a draw.

In Round 2, Potapov almost caused an even bigger upset.

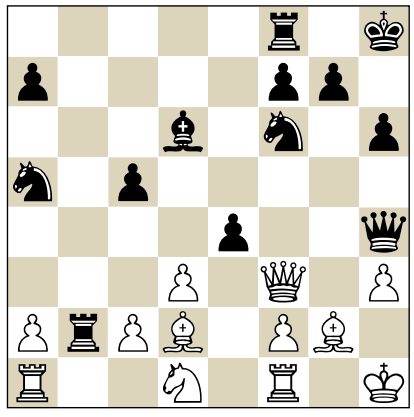


Jobava-Potapov
Aix-les-Bains 2011 (2)
position after 18...♔h8

The position has clearly emerged from the Two Knights Defence. There are similarities with an old game Fischer-Bisguier from 1963. White always has to be careful in this kind of position in view of the vulnerability of his king.

19.♗d2 This is just about possible.

19...♖xb2 20.♘d1 The point of the previous move. **20...e4!** Making the play even sharper.

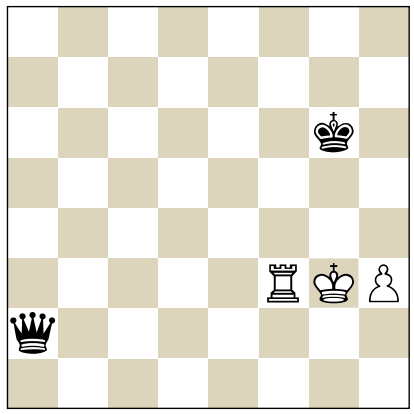


21.♕e3? A terrible mistake for a player of Jobava's class. Correct was 21.dxe4. After 21...♘c4 22.♕d3 ♖b4 23.♗xb4 ♕f4 24.♕g3 ♕xg3 25.fxg3 cxb4 Black has positional compensation for the exchange.

21...♖xc2 22.♗xa5 exd3

Now White will just be able to save his skin. 22...♖e2! would have given Black a decisive advantage. White cannot capture the rook, and after 23.♕c1 exd3 he has no defence against the threat of 24....d2.

Back to Round 1. Strange things also happened in the endgames.

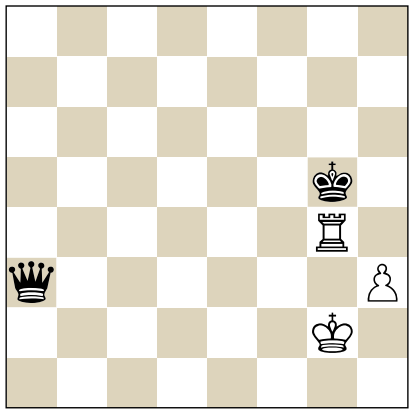


Navara-Colin
Aix-les-Bains 2011 (1)
position after 70...♕xa2

The position is technically winning for Black. This would be different with the pawn on g3, since this would allow White to hold the draw, as his king would have enough squares.

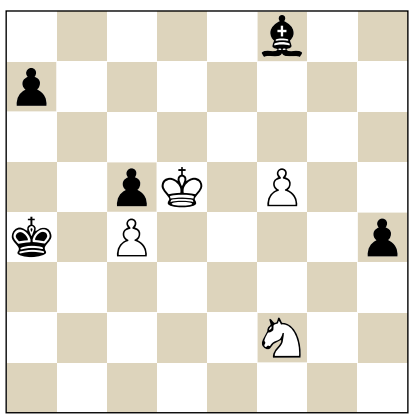
71.♖f4 ♕a3+ 72.♔g2 ♔g5 73.♖g4+ A good test.

Jan Timman



73...♔f5?

Black chooses the wrong side. He should have played 73...♔h5 (or even 73...♔h6), when the white rook cannot stay on the fourth rank, with the result that the black king will penetrate via h4. In the game, the king remained cut off.



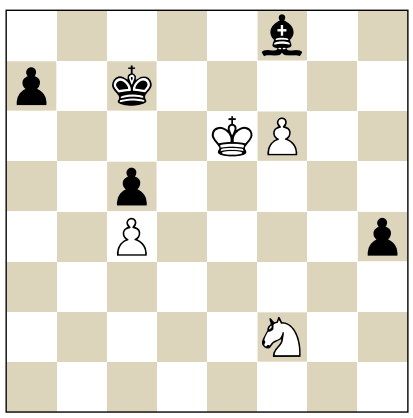
Battaglini-McShane
Aix-les-Bains 2011 (1)
position after 52.f5

Black is totally winning. The a-pawn has a clear path to promotion.

52...♔a5?

For incomprehensible reasons McShane gives away a tempo. Now it's a draw.

53.f6 ♔b6 54.♔e6 ♔c7

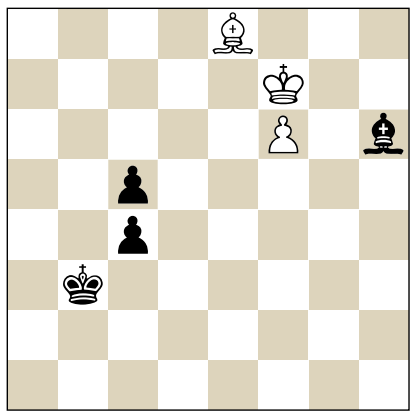


55.♘h3? Battaglini seems to be unfamiliar with the theme of the perpetual attack. After 55.♔f7! ♗h6 56.♔g6 or 55...♗d6 56.♔e6 Black will be unable to make progress.

55...a5

Now Black has his tempo back. He went on to win easily.

The position after Black's 54th move corresponds with Selesniev's famous study.



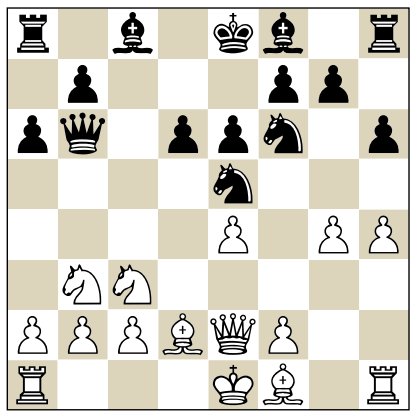
Selesniev 1920
Draw

The doubled c-pawns are deadly dangerous. White has the following way out:

1.♔g6 ♗f4 2.♗f7! ♔b4 3.♗xc4! ♔xc4 4.♔f5 ♗d6 5.♔e6

With a perpetual attack.

Aix-les-Bains saw a number of interesting Sicilian games.



Vallejo-Papaioannou
Aix-les-Bains 2011 (5)
position after 11...♘e5

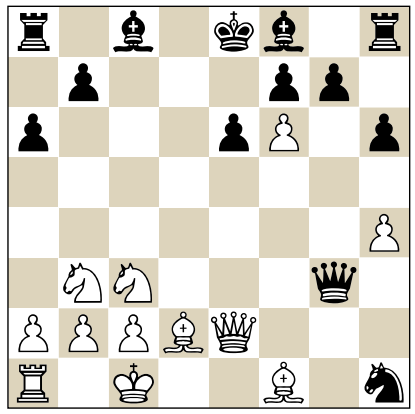
In this position, Vallejo launched out on a wild adventure with virtually unpredictable consequences.

12.f4 Forcing Black to capture on g4.

12...♘exg4 13.e5 dxe5 14.fxe5 ♕c7!

A typical finesse in these kinds of positions.

15.exf6 ♕g3+ 16.♔d1 ♘f2+ 17.♔c1 ♘xh1

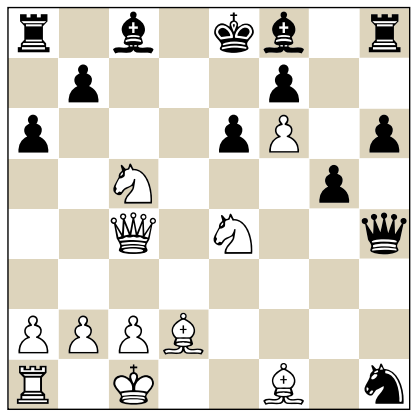


Black has won an exchange, but his initiative has petered out. With the white king relatively safe, White can launch an attack.

18.♘e4 ♕xh4 19.♕c4 g5!

A good defence. Black covers his queen, while at the same time removing the capture on g7 from the position.

20.♘bc5

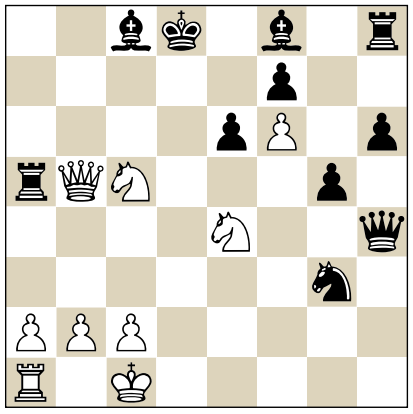


20...♘g3

But here Black loses the thread. After the text White has mate in 9, a clear sign of how dangerous the position is for Black. The only defence was 20...b5!, which prevents White from checking the black king with his queen. The game then continues as follows: 21.♕d4 ♕h2 22.♗a5 ♕f4+ 23.♔d1 ♕xf1+ 24.♔d2 ♕f4+ 25.♔c3 ♕f3+, and the white king will be unable to hide from the checks. After 26.♔b4? ♗xc5+ 27.♘xc5 0-0!

Black would be able to take his king to safety.

21.♕a4+ b5 22.♗xb5+ axb5 23.♕xb5+ ♔d8 24.♗a5+ ♖xa5



25.♕xa5+

No one will hold it against Vallejo that he misses a quicker mate here. Who would not take the rook? But after 25.♕b6+ it would have been mate two moves earlier.

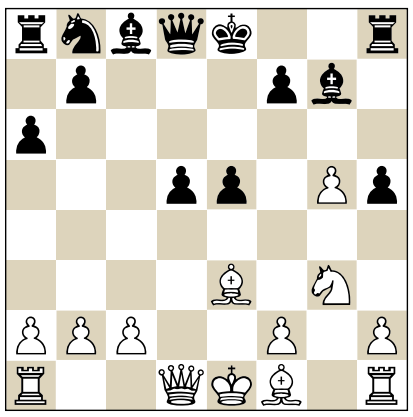
25...♔e8 26.♕b5+ ♔d8 27.♕b6+ ♔e8 28.♘d6+

Black resigned.

In the following Sicilian the white player was less lucky.

SI 19.14 – B90
Ivan Cheparinov
Mircea Parligras
Aix-les-Bains 2011 (8)

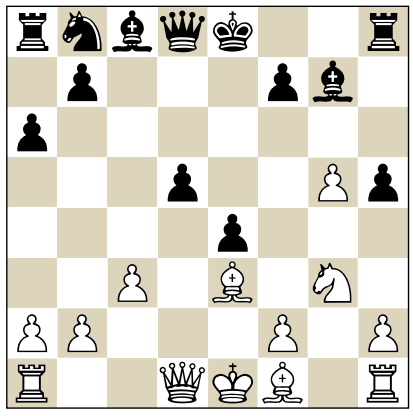
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e3 e6 7.g4 e5 8.♘f5 h5 9.g5 ♘xe4 10.♘xg7+ ♗xg7 11.♘xe4 d5 12.♘g3



12...e4

For years, the theoretical discussion has concentrated on the position after 12...d4 13.♗d2 ♕d5. By advancing the e-pawn Black follows a different strategy. He wants to put the king's bishop in a central position on e5. That the h-pawn will be lost is of no great moment.

13.c3



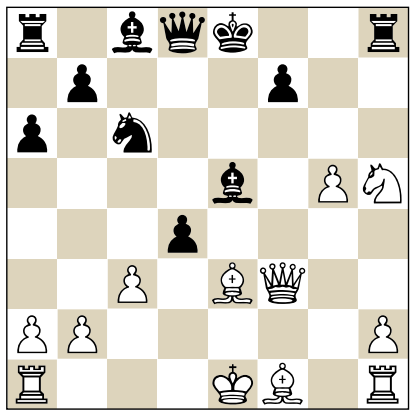
13...♘c6

This is the real novelty. 13...♗g4 had been played before, but that looks less good after 14.♗e2.

14.♘xh5 ♗e5 15.f4

A logical move that forces Black to give up his outpost on e4.

15...exf3 16.♕xf3 d4



17.♗c4?

This boils down to a far too optimistic piece sacrifice. Correct was 17.0-0-0 ♗e6 18.♖g1, with complicated play and chances for both sides.

17...♕e7 18.0-0-0 dxe3

White will fail to get sufficient compensation later in the game, and after swapping the queens he throws in the towel.

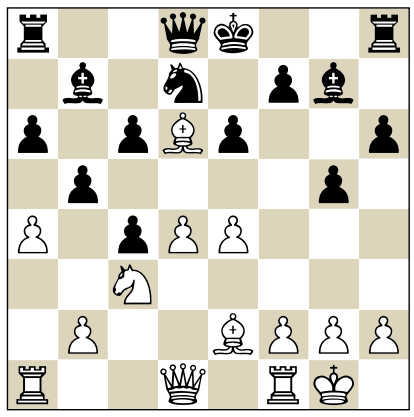
19.♖hf1 ♗e6 20.♘f6+ ♔f8 21.♗xe6 ♕xe6 22.♕xe3 ♗xf6 23.♕xe6 fxe6 24.♖xf6+ ♔e7

White resigned.

Cheparinov was better prepared in the 1.d4 openings.

SL 6.6 – D43
Ivan Cheparinov
Samvel Ter Sahakyan
Aix-les-Bains 2011 (5)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 e6 5.♗g5 h6 6.♗h4 dxc4 7.e4 g5 8.♗g3 b5 9.♗e2 ♗b7 10.0-0 ♘bd7 11.♘e5 ♗g7 12.♘xd7 ♘xd7 13.♗d6 a6 14.a4

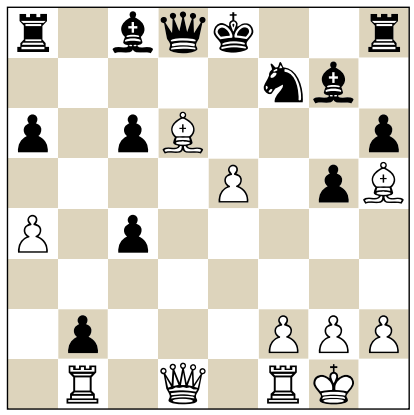


14...b4 The latest try. The alternative 14...e5 has often been played at top level. According to the latest developments, this will enable White to get an advantage.

15.d5 A sharp piece sacrifice, introduced into chess practice by l'Ami last year, and probably a move thought up in the Topalov camp.

15...bxc3 16.dxe6 ♘e5 17.♗h5 cxb2 In l'Ami-Henrichs, Vlissingen 2010, there followed 17...♗c8 18.e7? ♕xd6, and Black was winning. I think that l'Ami simply made a mistake, having intended to capture on f7. This game demonstrates how dangerous the situation is for Black.

18.♖b1 ♗c8 19.exf7+ ♘xf7 20.e5!



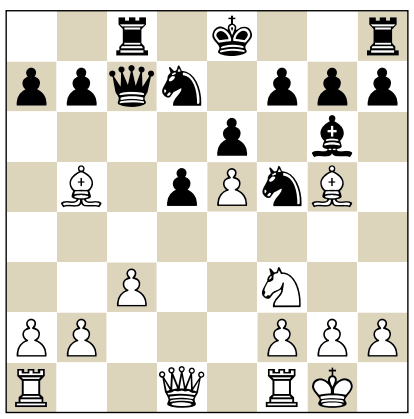
Jan Timman

Hemming in Black even further. After this Ter Sahakyan fails to find an effective defence. Maybe there isn't one.
20...♗f8 21.♕f3 ♖a7 22.♕xc6+ ♕d7 23.♕xc4 ♕e6 24.♕c6+ ♕d7 25.♕c3 ♗xd6 26.e6 ♕xe6 27.♕xh8+ ♔d7 28.♕d4
Black resigned.

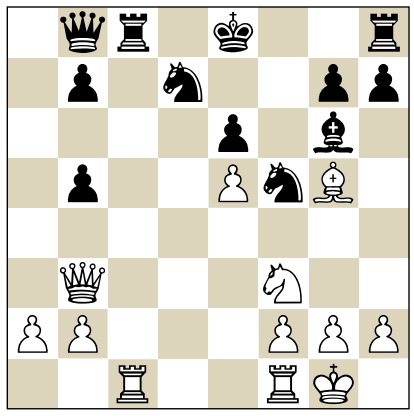
It was refreshing to see Judit Polgar making her entry in the European Championship.

CK 4.2 – B12
Judit Polgar
Viorel Iordachescu
Aix-les-Bains 2011 (10)

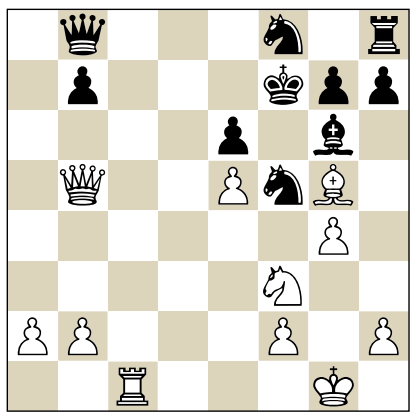
1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5
Earlier in the tournament, Judit had played 3.f3 against Ragger. That experiment hadn't worked, which is why she now goes for the Advance Variation. This type of play suits her well.
3...♗f5 4.♘d2 e6 5.♘b3 ♘d7 6.♘f3 ♗g6 7.♗e2 ♘h6 8.0-0 ♘f5 9.c3 ♖c8 10.♗f4
A quiet developing move that is not played very often.
10...c5 11.dxc5 ♗xc5 12.♘xc5 ♘xc5 13.♗b5+ ♘d7 14.♗g5 ♕c7



15.c4!
Preparing a piece sacrifice that will at least net her a draw and which puts her opponent under heavy pressure.
15...a6 16.cxd5 The consequence of the previous move.
16...axb5 17.♖c1 ♕b8 18.dxe6 fxe6 19.♕b3
A critical moment. Black now has several options.

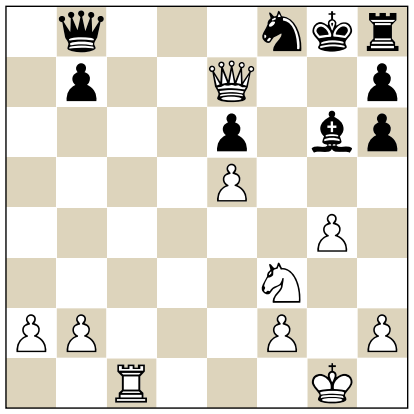


19...♘f8?
After this passive defensive move Black will prove unable to mobilize his kingside.
19...♗f7 was too passive as well in view of 20.g4! ♘e7 21.♗xe7 ♔xe7 22.♕b4+ ♔e8 23.♕d6!, and Black will be overrun.
A good defence was 19...♔f7, with the point of 20.♖fd1 ♘xe5! 21.♘xe5+ ♕xe5 22.♖d7+ ♔e8, and strangely enough, White has nothing here.
Another playable move would have been 19...♖c4. After 20.♖xc4 bxc4 21.♕xc4 ♗f7 22.♕b5 h6! 23.♖d1 ♕c7 24.♖c1 ♕b8 White has no more than a draw by repetition.
20.♕xb5+ ♔f7 21.♖xc8 ♕xc8 22.♖c1 ♕b8 23.g4!
Judit continues her energetic play.



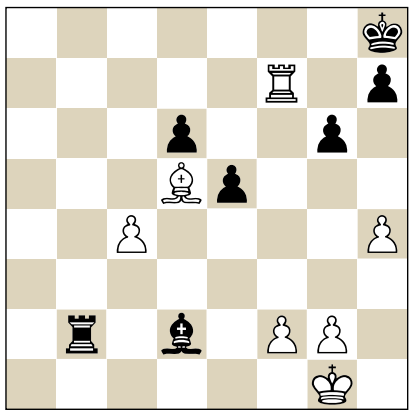
23...♘h6
Now Black is out of the game. He should have withdrawn his knight to e7. But it was very hard to see that after 23...♘e7 24.♗xe7 ♔xe7 25.♕b6 ♘d7 26.♖c7 he had the hidden defensive move 26...♔d8!. The endgame after 27.♖xb7+ ♘xb6 28.♖xb8+ ♘c8 29.♘d4 is better for White, but not clearly winning.

24.♕b4 ♔g8 25.♗xh6 gxh6 26.♕e7



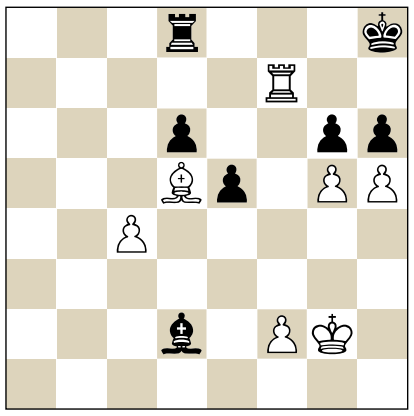
The queen penetrates with decisive strength. White won after 54 moves.

Judit also showed her skill in the endgame.



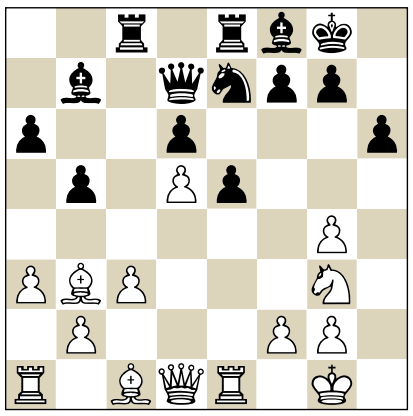
Polgar-Edouard
Aix-les-Bains 2011 (4)
position after 32...♖xb2

White is better, but because of the reduced material it is unclear whether her advantage will be sufficient for the win.
33.g4! Expansion on the kingside.
33...♖b8 34.g5 ♖d8 35.♔g2
White is threatening to take her king to g4, intending to then play h4-h5.
35...h6 36.h5! A thematic breakthrough with a special point.



36...♖g8
Apparently, Edouard had pinned his hopes on this move.
37.♖d7 ♖g7 38.♗f7!
A study-like move that immediately decides the game.
Black resigned.

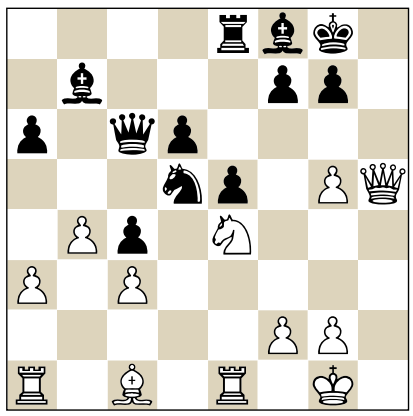
Towards the end of the tournament, nerves inevitably began to play a part. In the penultimate round, the following thing happened to David Navara.



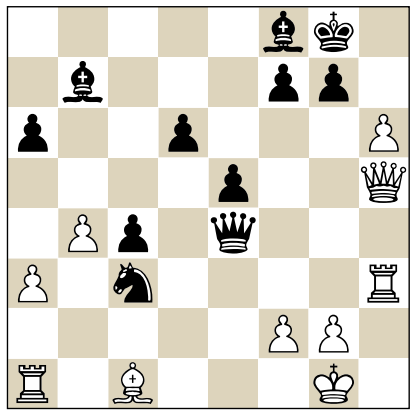
Navara-Saric
Aix-les-Bains 2011 (10)
position after 19.♘g3

19...♖c4!
A positionally justified exchange sacrifice. Black gets a pawn and a strong centre by way of compensation.
20.♗xc4 bxc4 21.b4
Creating a majority on the queenside.

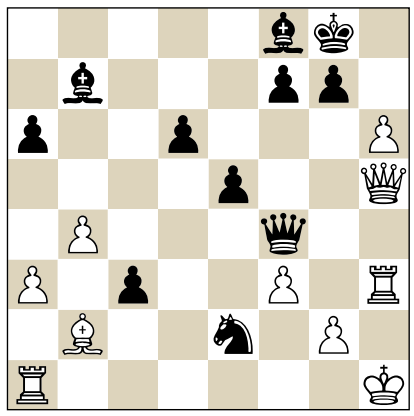
21...♘xd5 22.♘e4 h5
Unnecessary. After simple moves like 22...♗e7 and 22...♕c6 Black could have awaited developments with confidence.
23.g5 ♕c6 24.♕xh5
White has clearly obtained counterplay.



24...♘xc3?
This capture is too daring. Correct was 24...♘f4!, and after 25.♕g4 ♘d3 White has nothing better than 26.♘f6+ gxf6 27.gxf6+ ♔h7 28.♕h5+, with a draw because of perpetual check.
25.♖e3!
Strong play. White gets a dangerous attack.
25...♖e6
The only move. Black has to sacrifice a full rook in order to prevent being mated at once.
26.♖h3 ♖h6 27.gxh6 ♕xe4



28.f3?
A terrible mistake. 28.♖f3 would have given White a decisive advantage.
28...♕d4+ 29.♔h2 ♘e2!
Navara must have overlooked this. Black is threatening mate in one.
30.♗b2 ♕f4+ 31.♔h1 c3



Black is fully in control, but the conversion of his advantage took some time. Saric went on to win the game after a long endgame on move 87. ■

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Anish Giri

CURRENT ELO: 2690
DATE OF BIRTH: June 28, 1994
PLACE OF BIRTH: St. Petersburg, Russia
PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Rijswijk, The Netherlands

What is your favourite colour?
Red & Green and Black & White. The first set for its importance in everyday life in the big world and the second for its importance in our small world of chess.

What kind of food makes you happy?
Japanese, French, Chinese, Spanish, whatever, but not Dutch. Sorry, Holland.

And what drink?
Seeing how much 'Chocomel' I drink at chess tournaments, one may even wonder if I have a sponsor contract.

Who is your favourite author?
Arthur Conan Doyle. From the times when I was still reading books, and not just in trains and airplanes...

What is your all-time favourite movie?
I found psychological thrillers like *Dark City* and *Inception* pretty much 'psychologically thrilling'.

Do you have a favourite actor?
I have always been fascinated by Jackie Chan, but Mr. Bean appeals to me the most and is my true spiritual hero.

And a favourite actress?
The prettier, the better. As simple as that.

What music do you like to listen to?
Lots of different music, but lately hip-hop, mainly by Drake.

Do you have a favourite painter or artist?
Me and art... Our roads still haven't crossed, but I am sure they aren't parallel.

What do you see as your best result ever?
From a chess point of view managing to float on 50 per cent in Tata 2011. As for a title, of course Dutch Champion 2009 was a remarkable success.

What was the best game you ever played?
Nyzhnyk-Giri 0-1 in Enschede 2008. I am even more proud about the fact that I managed to beat a young talent, while being just 14 myself. Ah, and in case I misunderstood the question – it was table football.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
Kasparov, for he was the last one to handle the guys and stay on top for two decades.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
Three books. One taught me the rules, the second the basics and the third the classics. *How to become a gentleman*; *O, chess* by A.Karpov and E.Gik and *My Great Predecessors 2* by Garry Kasparov.

What is the best chess country in the world?
Holland. (I hope you forgive me now for the food question...)

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?
I will just name a few: body language, eye-contact, sports, telling stories/gossip and quietly analysing situations and problems. And also, self-criticism.

What is it that you dislike in a person?
Stupidity in combination with arrogance. Each of them separately is bearable and sometimes even welcome, but not together.

Do you have any superstitions concerning chess?
Yes. Before writing anything on the score sheet, I write the date. I do the same with schooltests. So far, both mostly work, believe it or not.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
Hard question. I like surprises, but I don't like when it hurts, I would say – make me anything but a chess clock.

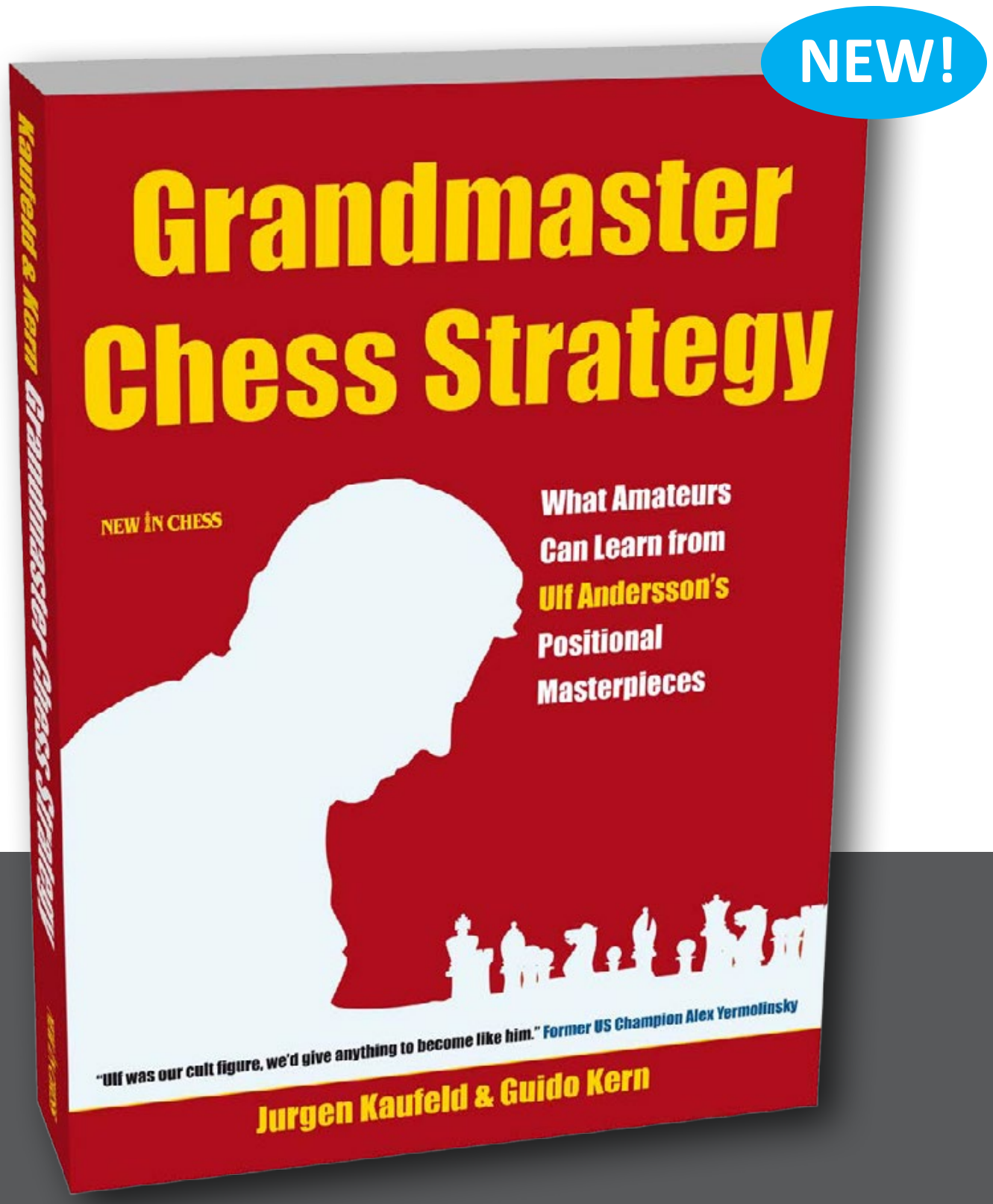
Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
Just when I was making the list, I realized that I won't be able to follow the hyper-intelligent conversation.

Is there something you'd love to learn?
The first thing that comes to mind is to play the guitar. Those that can play it always end up in the centre of any company, literally as well as figuratively.

What is the stupidest rule in chess?
Taking en passant. Strange rule if you think about it – you did it, passed by, unnoticed by the opponent's soldier... yet, you die.

What will be the nationality of the 2050 chess world champion?
Hope it will be an old Dutchman... But I am afraid that a young Asian will take over.

Ulf Andersson explained in 15 thematic chapters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